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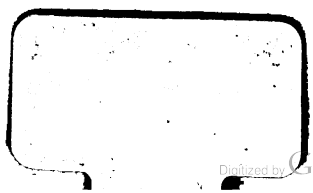

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"Vive, vale! si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum."

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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# LECTURES.

## LECTURE XVI.

### TOPIC XII.

CONSIDER THE PRINCIPLES OF A WORD OR ACTION.

For example, John v. 14: "Behold, thou art made whole; sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." This was the language of Jesus Christ to the man whom he had just before healed of an infirmity of thirty-eight years' standing. Him Jesus now found in the temple. It is not imaginable that this meeting was fortuitous, and unforeseen to Jesus Christ: his providence, no doubt, conducted the man that way, directed him to the temple, whither he himself went to seek him. Examine, then, upon what *principles* Jesus Christ went to seek this miserable sinner; and you will find, 1. He went in great *love* to the poor man: he went in that same benevolence which inclined him to do good to all who had need, and in every place that he honoured with his presence. Jesus was, as it were, a public source of benefits; his hands every where bestowed beneficent gifts, and he even sought occasions when they did not present themselves. 2. He went by an engagement of *ancient* love, which he had made on behalf of this paralytic: his second favour flowed from his first: nor would he leave his work imperfect. Thus, it is said, in regard to



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his disciples, "Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them to the end." The bounty of Jesus Christ resembles that of his eternal Father, who calls, justifies, and in the end glorifies, those whom he first predestinated; and on this, as on one of the principal foundations, St. Paul establisheth our hope for the future: "God, having begun a good work in us, will perform it to the day of Christ;" and elsewhere, "God is faithful, who hath called you to the fellowship of his Son." 3. It was by a principle of *wisdom* and foreknowledge, that Jesus Christ sought this paralytic patient in the temple, in order to teach him his duty, to furnish him with the means of doing it, and to give him a more particular knowledge of the friend who had healed him; for he well knew that a tender faith, such as this man's was, had need of fresh and continual aid, as a young plant needs a prop to support it against winds and storms.

In like manner, if you had to examine these words of Jesus Christ to the Samaritan woman, "Go and call thy husband," John iv. 16; you might examine the intention of Jesus Christ in this expression. He did not speak thus because he was ignorant what sort of a life this woman lived: he knew that, to speak properly, she had no husband. It was then, 1. A word of *trial;* for the Lord said this to give her an opportunity of making a free confession, "I have no husband." 2. It was also a word of *kind reproof;* for he intended to convince her of the sin in which she lived. 3. It was also a word of *grace;* for the censure tended to the woman's consolation. 4. It was, farther, a word of *wisdom;* for our Lord intended to take occasion at this meeting to discover himself to her, and more clearly to convince her that he had a perfect knowledge of all the secrets of her life; as he presently proved, by saying, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband; for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband."

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Were you going to explain the ninth verse of the first of Acts, where it is said, "When Jesus was taken up, his disciples beheld him," it would be proper to remark the sentiments of the disciples in that moment, and to show from what principles proceeded that attentive and earnest looking after their divine Master, while he ascended to heaven.

Having given the text of Claude, I add, that however solicitous a commentator on Claude may be to preserve a separate and distinct service to each of his Topics, yet some of them have so close a correspondence, in various points, that it is not a little difficult to avoid confounding them together. Like the colours of the iris, they so unite and blend into each other as almost to defy any very precise discrimination of their respective limits. This is particularly the case in reference to the Topic which now comes to be considered. The principles of a word or action fall, in some measure, under the fifth Topic, 'Things implied;' but if there are some points in which they meet, and in which the one appears to be merged in the other, there are other points in which they differ so materially as to demand for each a separate consideration. Implication obviously includes many things which are very different from principles, as you will see by consulting Lecture XIII., Topic V.; and, on the other hand, it may frequently be necessary to recur to principles when they cannot with propriety be treated as things implied in the text. The Topic "Principles" has likewise an affinity with the nineteenth, "Grounds and Causes." Mr. Robinson evidently confounds them together; for, in commenting on the nineteenth Topic, he says, "Principles (12th) are sometimes best urged by implication" (5th)! Even Claude himself preserves not on this Topic his accustomed precision; for, in his second example, he abandons the term principle for that of intention, and proceeds to illustrate, not the principles of the text quoted, but the intention of our Saviour



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in his address to the woman of Samaria; thus confounding our present Topic with the fourteenth, "The end proposed." Now after these interchanges of terms, which must I think have confused many a student, if we should here so far succeed as to assign to our Topic a distinct and valuable province, calculated to promote variety in the elucidation and enforcement of divine truth, a practical benefit will be secured, and so far the object of the Lecture will be attained.

The word principle is undoubtedly derived from *principium*, the beginning; the element of some given truth; the source or origin of any thing: sometimes defined in the schools to be that from which any thing is done or known; or, in their own words, "*Unde aliquid est fit aut cognoscetur.*" That is, the principles of a word or action lead us to something out of which such a word or action had its rise, or in consequence of which it was so said or done, and on the truth of which the justness or propriety of the word or action turns. Thus, for instance, we are accustomed to observe that the Scriptures proceed throughout upon this principle, that man is a degraded, ignorant, and guilty being. This, as you will have frequent occasion to remark, is assumed in all its doctrines, precepts, covenants, and promises, because they would otherwise possess neither importance nor meaning, being applicable only to fallen creatures.

Now doctrines are laid down by some one; precepts are enjoined by some authority; but principle lies in the thing itself, and can only be discovered by close reflection. On the first reading of a text, such principle, though calculated to throw much light on the text or subject, may not be very obvious. However, it is the duty of every preacher to study his text with labour and patience, examining its connexion, and endeavouring to ascertain the precise meaning of the words which the Holy Ghost has taught. The old saying is here appropriate: *Veritas in puteo.* Sometimes

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the well is deep, and, if our contemplations do not give length enough to the bucket-chain, we shall not reach the water, but must get some one else to reach it for us: a method by no means the most creditable. Even when we have satisfactorily ascertained the meaning of a text, we may still trace it back to its elementary principles, in order to elicit such observations as may be adapted to place the subject in a clearer or in a stronger light. "That there are such things as principles," says Mr. Howe, "is beyond all doubt. There is nothing, no created thing, but has its principles: principles of being there are belonging to it. Every complete substance that exists in the world, and is a created one, must be supposed to have such principles; the principles from which it did proceed, and principles of which it does consist. There are also principles of knowledge as well as of being. There is no piece of knowledge, no sort of science, but has its principles, as you all know; and therefore religion, Christian religion; theology, Christian theology, must have its principles too. It is a science, a practical one, and of most absolute and universal necessity; and its principles must therefore be supposed of the most absolute and universal necessity too." Now if the mathematician, by tracing back the steps of his demonstration to certain axioms and first principles, proves that the conclusions at which he had arrived are just and accurate, why may we not expect that a frequent recurrence to elementary principles on the part of the Christian minister will answer a similar purpose. Here, however, it is proper to observe that we do not examine the principles of a text, as we do the arguments and declarations of men, to see whether what is recorded or declared be true or false: our aim is simply to render its meaning more apparent and luminous; to show the reasonableness or excellency of that which is certainly true; for no proposition can be more self-evident than this, that whatever God has revealed must of necessity be free from error.

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When therefore any thing is declared, the justice or the excellency of which, from the omission of those circumstances in which it originated, is not at first apparent, we in this case trace back our inquiry to the principle on which the declaration turns, till we discover such considerations as may be adapted to illustrate the subject of our inquiry. Thus, with regard to the moral law, we may argue from our Topic to convince those who suppose "that its claims are abrogated by the gospel; and that when it is declared that believers are not under the law, but under grace, it is the intention of the Holy Ghost to affirm, not only that we are redeemed from the curse of the law, but that it no longer has any claim upon us; that it ceases to be a rule of life." Now, whatever part of the law we contemplate, it requires very little argument to prove that it stands not on the basis of merely arbitrary appointment, like the ceremonial law, which was temporary, and passed away when the ends for which it was given had been accomplished. All the requirements of the moral law may be traced back to the original law of our being, by which we should have been bound even though no written law had ever been given, and from which nothing can ever release us. Hence our blessed Lord himself, in his memorable reply to the lawyer who sought to ensnare him, traces the law to its original principles, and declares that the substance of the law was comprehended in love to God and love to man: to which we were evidently bound by the law of our creation.

In the same manner, if the preacher were desirous of convincing his audience of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, upon the authority of the law of God and its denunciations against every offender (Gal. iii. 10), he might revert to such first principles as love to God, &c., and comment upon them, showing that nothing but confusion could result from the breach of such primordial principles, and that the sanctions of the law are absolutely necessary for the best interests of man. Thus we may argue to

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silence all the presumptuous declarations of a sinful world, and expose the deformity and turpitude of its practices, which, unless pardoned through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, will eventually be followed by shame and everlasting contempt.*

It may be further observed that, under the term principle, we include things somewhat less certain than those first principles of religious truth to which we have just adverted, but which nevertheless are common property, and deserve the attention of the gospel minister, as well as that of the senator or the barrister, so far as they may afford profitable items of remark, comment, or illustration. Bishop Wilkins observes, on this subject, "Such kind of notions as are general to mankind, and not confined to any particular sect, or nation, or time, are usually styled common notions, seminal principles, and such as the Romans called *lex nata*." We have an immense supply of what are called maxims or proverbs. Those of holy writ may generally be traced either to experience or to some original principle; though some of them stand upon authority alone, which indeed is quite adequate to their support. Of those which are purely human, many were originally invented to apologize for error, or for some carnal policy, and can hardly be admitted to come under the bishop's definition, however generally they may have been received. A notion is not of course to be considered as necessarily true merely because it is commonly admitted; but truth will generally be in its favour, so far as it has reference to reason, conscience, experience, or our natural senses, and all the feelings of uncorrupted nature; as consciousness of right and

* Thus a direct act of faith in Christ is the true principle of our security, and by this alone can we be justified; not because faith is the root of all virtues, but because it lays hold on Christ, for whose sake alone we are accepted, whatever be the amount of our renovation, which indeed must necessarily follow, but is not the thing that gives peace to the conscience. See *Bickersteth* on the Doctrines of the Reformers.

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wrong, recognition of a Supreme Governor of the world, and of the duty we owe to him, may be appealed to as original principles, as the apostle clearly does in Rom. i. 20, and ii. 14, 15.

It is not surprising that an arm so strong should too often be seized by the adversary, or at least that a pretence of adverting to first principles should be made by designing, deluded creatures, for the subversion of truth. Here, then, we are led to the consideration of false principles; and I almost fear the volume of false principles would be much more bulky than that of the true. It will therefore be the preacher's business to expose and refute false principles (see Lecture on Propositions) by establishing such as are true. For an instance of false assumption it has been alleged "that the goodness and mercy of God, as a first principle, denies that he ever will punish a weak, erring, and mutable creature with everlasting misery for such errors as his very nature throws him into." I have no doubt but that hundreds of thousands take shelter under this specious principle; but it is a false one; it subverts at once the divine authority; it contradicts the testimony which declares that he will judge every man "according to his works;" it takes away moral responsibility: it supposes man to be only and merely passive to evil, whereas man is an active offender against his fellow-creature, an active sinner against his Maker and against the dictates of his own conscience. In neglecting all means for his moral improvement; in despising or rejecting the method that infinite wisdom has provided for his recovery, pardon, and sanctification; in persisting in a course of opposition to God's declared will, nay, disputing its very authority; he is not merely unfortunate, but guilty. Therefore his taking shelter under God's goodness and mercy, and urging these against his holiness and justice, is futile and vain; for the justice of God forms as properly a principle of judgment as those attributes selected for convenience and excuse. It

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may be also observed that just original principles never clash one against another, but harmonise and give strength and confirmation to the humble inquirer after truth.

The practical application of our Topic will, I have no doubt, be found chiefly in what the puritan authors termed "*previous considerations.*" They did not adopt the term principle, but they attended to the thing itself.* Their manner appears to us to have been exceedingly prolix and tiresome: the principle on which they acted was, that it is better to say too much than too little.† Some of our twenty or twenty-five minute preachers, however, think otherwise. Men are ever prone to extremes; but the wise will take a middle course. In general, when the principle is once made sufficiently plain, it is perhaps dangerous to proceed. The following is an example of previous considerations, from Howe on Heb. x. 36: "For ye have need of patience," &c. To understand the force of this expression, he proposes several previous considerations, which in fact include the principles on which the text turns. These are,

I. That the natural constitution of the human soul disposes it equally to covet and pursue a desirable good and to shun a hurtful evil.

II. That the want of such a desirable good is as afflictive and grievous as the pressure of a present evil.

III. That an ability to bear that want is as real and needful an endowment as the fortitude by which we endure a painful evil.

IV. That, therefore, it equally belongs to patience to be exercised in the one case as in the other; and, the general nature being found in each, the name (patience) is with equal fitness common to both.

* It would of course be improper for us to be always using the term; but we as well as they can apply to the thing itself by other forms of expression.

† One of these good puritans stated fifty or sixty previous considerations, and then said, "I shall now discuss the text itself."—*Robinson.*



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From these preliminary remarks and statements, respecting the particular object of this Lecture, I think it must be apparent that the study of principles is of high importance to the Christian minister. The time necessary for acquiring this excellency may be unwillingly given up: but experience will prove that instead of time lost it is time gained; for, the more accurately we ascertain the principle of a text or subject, the more certainly we avoid subsequent darkness and embarrassment; for here we have the mirror of a subject, and that which gives elements and argument. The judicious application of our Topic to the elucidation of truth forms a broader distinction among preachers than learning and science ever can do. By the successful study of principles a preacher will therefore more surely grow in the estimation of his people, and of all judicious persons, than by increasing discoveries of other qualifications. By running back to causes (which is one of the explanatory and synonymous terms of principles) our greatest divines have acquired an imperishable name, by proving most clearly the infinite and eternal being of Jehovah independent of authority or written testimony. It is by the examination of principles that Locke, Beattie, Watts, S. Clarke, Berkeley, Butler, Abernethy, Horsley, and many others have acquired their just fame, while those who cannot or will not think must make to themselves a name of meaner materials, which will soon perish and fall from public notice.

I am fully aware that the humble though diligent student is commonly the most fearful: the very mention of such great names may be discouraging. Allow me to say that in this excellence there are many degrees; we may say, in this case, as it has been excellently said in another, that "here a lamb may wade, an elephant may swim." The lowest degree is honourable, and not of difficult acquirement, but some degree is absolutely indispensable. It is somewhat like our common reason; it is of all

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growths, but is every where the chief honour of human kind.*

As examples are generally as needful as rules and statements, I shall now proceed to give the best I can, and I hope your own reading will produce examples of equal value.

Having in my last section laid down the doctrine of principles as clearly as possible, I proceed in this to show the particular objects or points of usefulness which suggest themselves. They may perhaps be profitably arranged under the following heads:—

First: Principles in reference to a short observation.

Secondly: To one part of a discourse.

Thirdly: The whole discourse.

Fourthly: In reference to exposition and study in general.

First: Apply principles to a briefly expressed observation. This was M. Claude's original design, and this use of the Topic he has satisfactorily illustrated in his remarks on John v. 14: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

This was the language of Jesus Christ to the man whom he had just before healed of an infirmity of thirty-eight years' standing. Him Jesus now found in the temple. It is not imaginable that this meeting was fortuitous, and unforeseen of Jesus Christ. His providence, no doubt, conducted the man that way, directed him to the temple whither he himself went to seek him. Examine then upon what *principles* Jesus Christ went to seek this miserable sinner, and you will find that he went in great *love* to the poor man. He went in that same benevolence which inclined him to do good to all who had need, in every place that

* Upon the subject of this Lecture, read most attentively the former parts of Dr. Burder's Mental Discipline. A work of very great value, though in small compass.

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was honoured with his presence; he went on an engagement of ancient *love*, and having begun a good work on the poor man, he proceeds to perfect it.*—*Robinson's Claude*, vol. ii., p. 137.

As an example of judicious observation, on our Topic, we quote a passage from Bishop Horsley, by which it appears that the bishop thought it right to examine even the erroneous principles of ancient philosophy, and to correct them by stating such as are true, agreeably with the direction given in the last Lecture.

It has been said that Nature does nothing in vain—in one sense it is true, because the whole of nature is conducted by the continual providence of the Being who created the whole. In what are called the operations of nature, God is the first and sovereign agent. The maxim, therefore, that nature never acts in vain, is true; but the truth of it rests upon the wisdom and power of God, who made and governs nature. And it is improperly alleged as itself being a first principle of science, of original and intrinsic evidence, since it is only a consequence of another principle, that God never acts in vain.—*Horsley*, vol. iii., p. 332, 333.

Secondly: Apply the Topic to the first head of a discourse where the following part or parts are to consist of a different character. This particular service of our Topic is to explicate the sense of a text by referring to its principle, assigning cause, or reason; and to this use the Topic may very often be applied. In all such cases it is easy as well as profitable to ask ourselves, How is this expression to be accounted for? We then very properly refer to some previous state of things under which the word or action was spoken. The circumstances then existing between Jehovah the speaker, and man the hearer; of one or both of them. Or we must consider the principle in

* See Claude's remarks in full, at the beginning of this Lecture.

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reference to something that is perfect; something that ever was essentially true, and could not be otherwise in the very nature of things; as, that God is righteous, and cannot be otherwise. This being the case, how would such a perfect and righteous Being (or, in another case, gracious or good Being) act, decide, or speak, when such an occurrence in this world called for such action or speaking? The manner in which such action or dispositions in man would be received by the pure and holy Governor of the world. The principle upon which any rule or regulation proceeded in giving intimations to man suited to human nature. Then, I say, the student, having carefully and for some time reflected on the view he is called to take, will proceed to supply what is wanting according to our present Topic of principles, as to the part of discourse requiring it; for as to a whole discourse we do not here provide for it, but shall do so presently.

Let us take an example from Mr. Howe, on Isa. lxiii. 10: "But they rebelled and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them."

I. The evil done;—Grieving the Holy Spirit.

II. The evil suffered;—God turning against them, &c.

I. The evil done. In its nature, and in its cause or principle.

1. In its nature. The Spirit of God was vexed.

1) It is implied that something is done against his will; his will was really crossed.

2) It is implied that he does apprehend and resent such an offence, Ps. xciv. 7; Deut. xxxii. 34; though not with such perturbations as men feel.

2. Inquire concerning the cause or principle of this vexation. This we shall discover in the titles and attributes of this Spirit; by this we shall see what must necessarily vex him. See Eph. iv. 30.

1) The Spirit of God is called the Spirit of truth, John

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xiv. 17; and he must be offended when his truth is lightly esteemed, and loosely adhered to.

2) He is called the Spirit of grace, Heb. x. 29. It must be offensive when the very grace of which he is the author, which he applies or reveals, is rejected by so many.

3) He is called the Spirit of faith, 2 Cor. iv. 13; therefore infidelity must be obnoxious, and when persons continue long under the gospel in obstinate unbelief, &c.

4) He is the Spirit of love, which is the great principle that disposes and inclines the soul towards God. He hath given us the Spirit of love, 2 Tim. i. 7. That principle which influences and is the life and soul of all the communications between the blessed God and believers, which itself therefore is called the communion of the Holy Ghost, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. Surely, then, love despised is a very heinous offence.

5) He is called the Spirit of power and life, John vi. 63; 2 Tim. i. 7; therefore all deadness in divine things (Rev. iii. 14—17) is loathsome.

6) The Spirit of holiness, Rom. i. 4; and in the text, his Holy Spirit. How then can he dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, who walk after the flesh and not after the Spirit?

7) He is the earnest of the blessed inheritance, 2 Cor. v. 5, with 1 Cor. ii. 9—12; therefore, when all the tendencies of professors are earthly, here is a perfect opposition.

8) He is a Spirit of prayer, Zech. xii. 10; but when there is no yielding to his influence; when that reproof is just, "Thou hast not called," &c., Isa. xliii. 22; or when prayer is heartless, cold and dead, formal and irregular, it is loathed of the Spirit.

9) He is the Spirit of union, Ezek. xi. 19; but where there is no union, no Christian love, the Spirit will depart: "Can two walk together except they be agreed?"—*Howe*, vol. vi., 240.

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Now this view of the cause or princple upon which this vexation is stated is very definite and plain, and prepares the way for the second part of the subject; and I am pleased with Howe, in this instance in particular, because he distinguishes between implication and principles, as a review will show you. I hope also that some good will be done by this quotation; nothing is more needful than a due examination of our conduct in regard to the Spirit. A dreadful catalogue of evils may fall upon us if we grieve this Spirit, and that Scripture be fulfilled in us, Hos. ix. 12.

I have said that I feared there were more false principles than true. It will often be needful to examine them. Mr. Walker, vol. iii., on James iv. 13—15, for the first part of his discourse, exposes the false principle of money-getting men.

The language which the apostle condemns relates altogether to a worldly project. The principal object is *gain:* not the "true riches," or that "good part" which shall never be taken from those who choose it, but the gain of this world. They say nothing of the measure of gain that would satisfy them, and nothing of the use to which they meant to apply their wealth. For any thing that these expressions imply, their desires might be without bounds, and their sole aim might be "to heap up silver as the dust," &c., to "join house to house," &c.

If this remark be just, we have already discovered one capital error in the governing principle of these men. To seek gain by honest industry, for necessary supplies, is not only lawful but honourable; but to seek it for its own sake, merely for the sordid pleasure of possessing it, betrays a mean and selfish spirit.

Further: The great Lord of all has no part in this scheme. These little arrogant words, 'we will,' thrust God out at once, and occupy his place. The persons here described appear to insure their lives against sickness and casualty; they think all will go well even for a year—a

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full year! No allowance is made for change of climate or fatigue, for robbery or fraud, or fluctuations in the price of their goods: but they will get large profits, &c.; whereas, when truth is allowed to speak, she says, "Ye know not what shall be on the morrow." "This night your souls may be required;" for "what is your life? it is even a vapour." This plain proposition, "your life is a vapour," undermines the scheme at once, and overwhelms the proud builders with shame.

This is an exposure of a false principle of action, and the folly described is not of rare occurrence. How strikingly is it exhibited by our Lord in the parable of him whom, in derision, we call "the fool in the gospel!"

But I beg leave to remark again, on this quotation from Walker, that it is a fine example of comment—a comment on the principle itself, which will always serve you a good turn either *pro* or *con*. Lawyers and senators are very partial to this kind of comment, and frequently employ it with great effect. It is here that they apply the lash of irony and sarcasm, by which they cut through the very sinews of false principles, and expose sophistries or errors.

The following instance of exposure refers to a still more lamentable evil, alas! too common in our age. The text is, "Rejoiceth not in iniquity," 1 Cor. xiii. 6. It is supposed that professing Christians, at least, do not rejoice in the iniquity of any of their own party or sect, but that they feel a secret satisfaction at the slips and falls of the party that is more particularly opposed to them: in this they think there is no sin. This is the false principle reprehended.

You have, says our author, much reason to the contrary (viz. of rejoicing in sin) both upon the common account and your own.

1. Upon the common account. That the Christian world should, while it is so barren of serious Christians, be so

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fertile and productive of such monsters; made up of the sacred Christian profession, conjoined with [with even worse than] pagan lives! and the more of sanctity any pretend to, the more deplorable is the case, when the wickedness breaks forth that was concealed before under the visor of that pretence. Is this no matter of lamentation to you? or will you here again say your unrelatedness to their party makes you unconcerned? If it do not justify your rejoicing, it will surely (you think) excuse your not mourning. Will it so indeed? Who made you of a distinct party? Are you not a Christian? Are you not a Protestant? and what do you account that but reformed, primitive Christianity? and so the more it is reformed, the more perfectly it is itself. Who put it in your power to make distinguishing additions to the Christian religion, by which to sever yourselves from the body of other Christians in the world, so as not to be concerned in the affairs of the body? If this or that member say, "I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?" Is it not the Christian name that is dishonoured by the scandalous lives of them that bear that name? Whose laws are they that are broken, the laws of this or that party? or are they not the laws of Christ? Will you say they are unrelated to him too? or have they no concern with him? Can any party be united within itself by so sacred ties as all Christians are with the whole body of Christ? I know no way you have to be unconcerned in such cases as the matter of your humiliation (when they occur within your notice) but by renouncing Christianity. Nor indeed would that serve the turn. For what will you do with your humanity? Are you not still a man, if you would be no longer a Christian? and even that methinks should oblige us to bewail the depravedness and dishonour of the nature and order of human beings, that they who were made for the society of angels, yea, and of the blessed God himself, should be found delighting and

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wallowing in worse impurities than those of the dog or the swine.

The more strictness in morals they have (falsely) pretended to, the greater is your obligation to lament their violations of those sacred rules (which you also profess to be subject to), and not the less. Do I need to tell you that even among pagans, where profession of greater strictness had been once entered into, an apostacy to gross immoralities have been the subject of solemn lamentation, as in the school (or church should I call it) of Pythagoras, where, when any who had obliged themselves to the observation of his virtuous precepts did afterwards lapse into a vicious course, a funeral and solemn mourning was held for them as if they had been dead.

2. On your own account; for when our Saviour says, "Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh," does he not also say, "Woe to the world because of offences?" and who would not fear and lament his share in that woe? Are you proof against all hurt by another's sin? What if it encourage you to sin too? What if it harden you in it? How many do some men's sins dispose to atheism, and to think there is nothing in religion? and, if you felt in yourselves an inclination to rejoice in them, that itself argues that the infection has caught upon you, seized your spirits, and corrupted your vitals; so that you have cause to lament your even having rejoiced; to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, &c., James iv. 9. One would think them indeed but half men, and scarcely any Christians, that can allow themselves so inhuman and unhallowed a pleasure as rejoicing in another's sin. It is very unworthy in man to take pleasure in seeing his fellow-man turning beast. There is little in it of the ingenuousness that belongs to human nature, to delight in the harms of others; much less of the prudence, to make sport of common mischief; and would a Christian rejoice in the disadvantages of his own cause,

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and in the dishonour and reproach of the very name which he himself bears?—*Howe.*

Here also we have the reprehension of a false principle in the manner of comment; severe, yet just. It is however here necessary to remark that some principles may be doubtful, or at least opinions founded on them may be so: true Christians may upon many points differ; and in such cases we are not to comment upon the sentiments of each other with severity, remembering the quotation which I made in the last volume to this point, but, instead of severity, use fair and temperate argument. No passion should here be suffered to rise; for, when once it is excited, it will not, ten to one, subside before much mischief is done.

For an extensive and masterly exposure of the false principles commonly advanced or acted upon, by the nominal professors of Christianity, I must refer the student to Mr. Wilberforce's Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians: a work of unspeakable value. The whole deserves to be read with close attention; but I cannot prevail upon myself to quit this part of my subject without giving you a brief extract, in which the fallacy of two of the most specious and destructive principles is very forcibly exhibited. The one is, that "it signifies little what a man believes, if his practice be upright," &c. The advocates of this sentiment often quote with exultation the well-known lines of Pope:

> For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
> His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

The other is that "whatever a man's opinion and conduct may be, provided he be sincerely convinced they are right, he cannot be criminal in the sight of God;" or, in other words, that "sincerity is all in all." Our author observes:

It would detain us too long fully to set forth the various evils inherent in these favourite positions, of which it is

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surely not the least that they are of unbounded application, comprehending within their capacious limits most of the errors which have been received, and many of the most desperate crimes which have been perpetrated, among men. The former of these maxims proceeds on the monstrous supposition that, although accountable creatures, we shall not be called to account for the exercise of our intellectual and mental powers. Moreover, it is founded on that grossly fallacious assumption, that a man's opinions will not influence his practice. The advocates of this fashionable principle require to be reminded that the judgment often receives a corrupt bias from the heart and the affections; that vice is the fruitful mother of prejudice and error. Forgetful of these acknowledged truths, and confounding the most important moral distinctions, they place on the same level those who occupy themselves in a sincere and warm pursuit of truth, and those who yield themselves implicitly to the opinions which early prepossession may have infused, or which passion or interest, or even acquiescing indolence, may have imposed upon their minds.

The latter of the foregoing maxims—that sincerity is all in all—proceeds on this groundless supposition, that the Supreme Being has not afforded us sufficient means of discriminating truth from falsehood—right from wrong: and it implies that, be a man's opinions or conduct ever so wild or extravagant, we are to presume that they are as much the result of impartial inquiry and honest conviction, as if his sentiments and actions had been strictly conformable to the rules of reason and sobriety. Never indeed was there a principle more general in its use, more sovereign in its potency. How does its beautiful simplicity, and compendious brevity, give it rank before the laborious subtleties of Bellarmin! Clement and Ravaillac, and other worthies of a similar stamp, from whose purity of intention the world has hitherto withheld its due tribute

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of applause, would have here found a ready plea; and their injured innocence should now at length receive its full though tardy vindication. "These, however," it may be replied, "are excepted cases." Certainly they are cases of which any one, who maintains the opinion in question, would be glad to disencumber himself, because they clearly expose the unsoundness of his principle. But it will be incumbent on such a one first to explain with precision why they are to be exempted from its operation; and this he will find an impossible task: for sincerity, in its popular sense, cannot be made the criterion of guilt and innocence on any ground which will not equally serve to justify the assassins who have been instanced. The conclusion cannot be eluded: no man was ever more fully persuaded of the innocence of any action than those men were convinced that the horrid deed they were about to perpetrate was, not merely lawful, but highly meritorious. Thus Clement and Ravaillac, being unquestionably sincere, were therefore indubitably innocent. Nay, the absurd and pernicious tendency of this principle might be shown to be even greater than what has yet been stated. It would scarcely be going too far to assert that, whilst it scorns the defence of petty villains, who still retain the sense of good and evil, it holds forth, like some well-frequented sanctuary, a secure asylum to more finished criminals, who, from long habits of wickedness, are lost to the perception, no less than to the practice, of virtue; and that it selects a seared conscience, and a callous heart, and a mind insensible to all moral distinctions, as the special objects of its vindication. Nor is it only in profane history that instances are to be found, like those which we have mentioned, of persons committing the greatest crimes with a sincere conviction of the rectitude of their conduct. Scripture will afford us parallels; and it was surely to guard us against the very error which we are now exposing that our blessed Saviour forwarned his disciples: "The

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time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.—*Wilberforce*, p. 103—105.

Thirdly: I propose now to consider a whole discourse that runs upon the principle contained in the words of a text; Isa. v. 4: "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"

The words are Jehovah's vehement complaint against the Jewish church and nation, his peculiar and most endeared people; and I shall consider the principles upon which the complaint turns, as to the form of expression the text offers, and the matter contained in it.

I. The form of expression.

The words run in a pathetical interrogatory exclamation, importing surprise and a kind of confusion in the thoughts of him who utters them. Here we have the *assignable cause* (the principle) of the words.

1. Here is something strange (if any thing can be strange in such a world as this). Whatever falls out either above or beside the common track of human observation, and so puts the reason upon new methods of discourse, we are accustomed to call strange, and such as causes surprise, which is nothing else but a disturbance of the mind upon its inability to give a present account of the reason of what we see; whence also it is that, as we still know more, the strangeness of things grows less, and consequently nothing can be strange to him to whom every thing is known. But how then come we here to find God himself under a surprise, and omniscience as it were put to a *nonplus?* Surely it could be no ordinary thing that should thus put infinite wisdom upon making inquiries; nor indeed was it; for could any thing be imagined more monstrous, and by all rational principles unresolvable, than upon a most rich and fertile soil, fenced and enclosed against all injuries from abroad, dressed and manured by the finger of God himself, and watered with all the influences of a propitious heaven; I say, could any thing be more prodigious than, in

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such a place, to see a fig-tree bear a thistle, or the fruit of the bramble load the branches of the vine? This is a thing directly against all the principles of mere nature, though not encouraged by the assistance of art; and therefore even the God of nature seems to stand amazed at the unnatural irregularity of such a monstrous event.

2. The other reason of such an interrogatory exclamation is the unusual indignity of the thing, this being as great an anomaly in the morality of actions as the former was in the nature of things; and therefore, as that passion of the mind which is raised by the strangeness of a thing is properly called wonder, so that which commences upon this is properly called indignation; it being a great trespass upon decency and ingenuousness, and all those rules that ought to govern the intercourses of rational beings; which are all crossed and even dissolved by that one grand fundamental destroyer of society, *ingratitude*. For society subsists by the mutual interchange of good offices, by which the wants and concerns of men are mutually supplied and served, that being the only thing that unites and keeps men together in civilized societies, who would otherwise range and raven like bears and wolves, and never but to seize a greater prey.

Now we find that ingratitude is the thing here exclaimed against with so much vehement *abhorrence:* a passion that has all in it that wonder has, with the addition of something more. Wonder rests merely in the speculation of things; abhorrence proceeds to a practical aversion and flight from them. But since a sinner is no strange sight, nor can it pass for a wonder to see men wicked, what cannot be found in the bare nature of things must be sought for in their degree; and therefore it must needs be some superlative height of wickedness which drew from God this loud exclamation; what that is will appear in the prosecution of the subject. We have,

II. The complaint itself, as a further developement of the principle upon which it proceeds:

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1. The party complaining, which is God himself. It must be confessed that, according to the strict nature of things, as he who knows all things cannot wonder, so neither can he who can do all things properly *complain*, wickedness being the cause of complaining, as ignorance is of wonder; yet God is here pleased to assume the posture of both. But, however possible it may be for infinite power to complain, it is certainly impossible for infinite goodness to complain without a cause; so that we read the indubitable justness of the complaint in the condition of him who makes it. A Being transcendently wise, just, and merciful, who cannot be deceived in the measures he takes of things and persons, nor prevaricate with those measures, by speaking beside the proportion of what he judges. And, after all, he it is that complains who has power enough to render all complaint needless; who has an omnipotence to repair to, and an outstretched arm to plead his cause in a higher dialect than that of words and fair expostulations. We see therefore the person here complaining, even the great and omnipotent God; and we may be sure, where God is the plaintiff, no creature can with either sense or safety be defendant.

2. The persons here complained of; they were the Jews, the peculiar and select people of God. A people that had no cause to complain. From the beginning of God's taking them under his care, they were fed at the immediate cost of heaven; they were dieted with miracles, with new inventions and acts of providence: the course of nature itself ministering to their necessities; the heavens, the sea, and all things dispensing with the standing laws of their creation to do them service, in order to their serving God. But it seems it was easier to fetch honey out of the bowels of the earth, to broach the rock, or draw rivers from a flint, than to draw obedience from them.

They were persons who wore all the marks of the peculiar incommunicable kindnesses of heaven; Ps. cxlvii. 20.

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They seemed an exception from (or rather above) the common rule of providence. A people whom God courted, espoused, and married; and yet, by a still greater wonder, continued to court them after marriage. God thought nothing too good for them to enjoy, nor thought they any thing too bad for themselves to commit. They were a people culled and chosen out of the rest of the world; in short, they were in some sense a gathered congregation, of whom God thus horribly complains.

3. The next thing to be considered is the reason or cause of this complaint raised against them, which was their unworthy, unsuitable returns made to the dealings of God with them; which will appear, first, by considering God's dealings with them; and, secondly, their dealings with God; and so, by confronting them both together, we shall give them all the advantage of contraries set off by nearness and comparison. The dealings of God with them may be included under three heads:

1) Instruction. They had the sure word of prophecy, which was able to make them wise unto salvation.

2) Mercies. The showers of his choicest blessings descended to refresh the vineyard of God.

3) Judgments. The pruning-knife of judgments is added to the more gentle manurings of mercy; and, when watering will not do, divine forbearance still digs about them before he executes the sentence of extirpation.

Well therefore might Jehovah say of this people, "What could have been done more to my vineyard?" Let us now look at their unsuitable returns. The context declares that the vineyard brought forth wild grapes; and specifies particularly,

1) Their injustice and oppression: ver. 7.

2) Their rapacity and covetousness: ver. 8.

3) Their luxury and sensuality: ver. 11, 12.

*South*, vol. v., p. 357.

Now I presume it will be thought that the doctrine of



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principles, and their due and vigorous investigation, are here realized, mixed too with much severe comment and critical acumen; yet it must be allowed that the style and argument are rather too profound for a common audience. The complaint brought against the Jews will apply to every apostate church upon earth; the elements of things are in all cases alike: it is human nature to abuse God's mercies. Here we see the infinite blessedness of being "kept by the power of God through faith to salvation." Dr. South's intention, by his scrutiny of the Jewish conduct, was to draw afterwards a comparison between the wickedness of the Jews and that of the puritans. The example is very good to our purpose, but his design was not to be commended.

A whole discourse may also be formed upon Heb. iv. 11: "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest;" by considering what are the principles of the apostle's reasoning in the text. These are,

I. That without labouring we can never enter into this heavenly rest, because the end and the means can never be separated.

II. That this rest, when we shall have entered into it, will abundantly repay us for our labour.

*E. Cooper*, vol. ii., 397.

The principles developed in the conduct of Scripture characters form a branch of study which will abundantly reward the student's attention. Many of the sublime doctrines of the New Testament cannot be traced to principles, because they are matters of pure revelation; here we have nothing to do but to receive them with the docility of children, and be thankful for the divine condescension that brought such sublime truths to our knowledge, truths which the "angels desire to look into." Never let us attempt to "be wise above what is written," or to bring down the sublime truths of revelation to the standard of

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human ratiocination, which I think to be not only a very high offence, but the sure path to error and confusion. Generally, however, no difficulty will be found in tracing *actions* to their principle; while this will always furnish scope for much profitable remark. Let the student endeavour to attain a comprehensive acquaintance with these principles of action, beginning this study with the easiest things, the easiest parts of Scripture; and what part can I recommend so properly as the actions of our blessed Saviour as related in the gospels? That which rendered the Saviour's teaching and doing so infinitely transcendent above all others will be found in the principles to which they may be traced: these were so uniform and correct as to draw forth the admiration, if not the approbation, of all men, even of enemies. It is true these principles were impugned by his enemies; Matt. xii. 24; but they knew better; they had a consciousness that the principles upon which our Lord spake and acted could not be contravened. Nicodemus's acknowledgment, and the well-known testimony of Josephus to Christ's character, are decisive of the point. Many of our modern infidels have made similar acknowledgments, and have but too justly exposed the iniquity of nominal Christians by reference to the Redeemer himself. These principles were the fair transcript of the Saviour's divine and mediatorial character. Jesus would as soon cease to be as not to act upon them; they gave determination to every act, ruled all thought and expression; they were an essential part of him who was "the light" and "the truth," and by which he became the restorer of all things. They were generally the very opposite of such as were popular, though this reflects no great credit on popular opinion; yet, when examination and reflection followed, the one appeared to be right and the other wrong.

Hence I think I cannot place the principles of our Lord in a better light than by contrasting them with the prevail-



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ing principles of the Jews, as discovered in the three years of our Lord's ministry on earth; yet this contrast must be restrained to a few instances, which will serve as a sample of the rest; and I might also observe that the disciples of our Lord themselves partook in some measure of the popular errors of the day; and I fear that the disciples of our Lord in the present age, with all the superior advantages derived from the New Testament, are not without the tincture of false principles.

I. It will be observed that the dominant principles of the Jews were *selfishness* and jealousy. They conceived that the divine favour did and ought to rest on themselves. Happy had it been for us if their principles had died with them. The Pharisee gathered around him all his national prejudices and vain conceits, and scorned all the rest of mankind, whom he compared with dogs and swine. However offensive these principles were to our Lord, yet he never treated the Jews with severity on this account, because there was something in the institution of the Jewish economy which might, if separated from the prophecies that related to the calling of the Gentiles, give some grounds for this national prejudice.

Our Lord therefore adopted the mildest course in the discovery of his own principles upon this head: hence he gives the parable of the Publican and Pharisee, and particularly that of the Prodigal Son; while the Jews discover the most unbecoming feelings against any favour shown to such characters. Our Lord discovered the principles of love and compassion to the lost and the miserable. He says, he "came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." He "came to seek and to save them that were lost." He also gave for the same purpose the parable of the good Samaritan. Now it will appear, upon studying the gospels, that benevolence mingled with compassion were the leading principles of our Redeemer's life; and here we see what principles we ought to cherish, as

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preachers of the gospel, towards poor sinners. If Christianity consists in any specific quality, it is here, and it becomes a rule of judgment in determining both our own conduct and that of others. A man is a Christian as far as he drinks into this spirit, and no further. A man may be a virtuous man without it, but cannot be a Christian—an imitator of Christ. The mind that was in Christ is not in that man who has not, in some degree, the love, philanthropy, and commiseration which he manifested. Love or benevolence to the outcasts of mankind is a fountain of grace that feeds and supplies every service. It never exhausts or yields reluctantly, but flows in copiousness and blessedness; the whole world is a pitiful price for such a character. He lives, but not to himself; labours but for the good of others; seeks not his own things, but the things of others.

II. Our Lord says, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up;" Matt. xv. 13. Our Lord found his vineyard overrun with thorns, Luke xiii. 4, and xiii. 11. To such a degree had *hypocrisy* spread that it was the wonder of the age that a man of sincerity was found; "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!" John i. 49. This principle is so evidently vicious and hateful that no man will own its existence in himself. The selfish principle was treated with a degree of lenity, but hypocrisy drew forth the severest expressions that ever escaped the Saviour's lips. We may guard against a thief, but we cannot always be aware of the hypocrite. Now the principles of Jesus were the very reverse of this, for he spake frankly and openly to the world. He was in this respect "the truth;" the law of truth was upon his lips. Sincerity and uprightness were principles of his conduct, and hence he justly becomes a pattern of imitation.

III. The corrupt principle of *pride* entwined itself around the Pharisee. This our Lord exposed in a severe lesson, Luke xiv. 7—10; which seems to be taken from

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Proverbs xxv. 5—7. Jesus lays to their charge that they loved to walk in long garments, and to be greeted in the markets, and to be called Rabbi. On the contrary, Christ exemplified humility and meekness, Matt. xi. 29. He was humble and meek under all indignities. He took upon him the form of a servant. He was among his disciples "as one that served." Now this principle flowed into his life, and there was no office too mean for him; he took a towel, and girded himself, and actually washed the feet of his disciples. I doubt not that humility, however passive it may appear, is a proper principle of action; for pride will choose its work, but humility stoops to the meanest service that Christ requires; and, as a principle, it is essential to active Christianity. Christ did not glorify himself, but him that sent him, and his life was a life of wonders, yet his acts flowed not from a principle of ostentation; and whatever acts are discovered among men to spring from pride, they are vicious in the very source of them. Christ's principles were free from this abominable taint.

IV. The Jew cherished *revenge*, and all the black passions that associate with it, Matt. v. 38, 43. But the principles of Jesus were forbearance and meekness under injuries and provocation. Hence he says, "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." The principles of Jesus on this head are as clear as the sun; and hence he said on the cross, in respect to his bitterest enemies, at whose wicked instigation he suffered, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Shame upon the Christian world, so little to be moved by these principles. Most just it is that they who are actuated by opposite principles should suffer all the effects that follow so close upon their heels. It may be said that this principle of the blessed Jesus is merely a passive quality. I deny that it is merely passive; for whatever quenches the violence of fire, or abates the burning fever, must be active: bad men kindle fires, and good men

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put them out. Most certainly the people called Quakers are, in this respect, the truest copy of our Lord's example, and most moved by his principle; but all such persons, of whatever name, as are like them, shall share the blessing, "Blessed are the peace-makers."

I find I shall hazard all patience if I follow up the contrast to the end, and therefore I shall only add here,

V. The wicked principles of the Jews generally, which ended in the death of Christ and the overthrow of their nation, and which led to such a state of things that Josephus says, "Such was the wickedness of the people that, if Titus Vespasian had not besieged them, some vengeance from heaven, some earthquake, some fire from heaven, kindred fire to that of Sodom, must have exterminated that people."

Now the principles of the blessed Jesus were found in his goodness: "a good tree brings forth good fruit." Always, every where, in every page, in every word, in every act, we see this principle of goodness; "he went about doing good," Acts x. 38. This goodness issued in all his miracles; they did not proceed from pride and ostentation, but from pure goodness. It required but little solicitation to excite this goodness; it was enough that misery or distress was seen or heard of, and the benefit was conferred. It was goodness without partiality (James iii. 17) to nation or sect, to state or fortune. "The blessing of them that were ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow's heart to sing for joy."

The student, proceeding in this manner in his examination as to how far principles will give him a key to the elucidation of truth, will not fail to succeed in very many instances; and, when he has for a long time studied principles from the four Gospels, let him proceed next with the Acts of the Apostles, and see what principles the apostles manifested. Here, indeed, infirmities are discovered; but, generally speaking, he will be able to trace back the ac-

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tions of the apostles to principles derived from Christ; and particularly let the whole life of St. Paul be subjected to the most severe scrutiny. We shall see nothing but this—"the love of Christ constrained him." The student will also observe that all the counteracting influences that opposed the career of the gospel originated in the principles of hell and the prince of darkness, as we see by Paul's declaration, Eph. vi. 12. After this study it will be proper to proceed to investigate the theology of the epistles, and it will be found to result from the facts of the gospel history and the nature of Christ's mediatorial work. Here reference may be had to the preface to these volumes. The benefit to be derived from this branch of study will be such as to lead you into a truly evangelical system of preaching: instruction will here be derived from a purer source than any of human invention, though human compositions, particularly the biography of good men, may afterwards be consulted with a similar design of tracing the principles developed in their conduct.

I proceed now to offer a few remarks as to *principles of interpretation*,* particularly in relation to the figurative language of the New Testament (which will also apply to that of the Old). Mr. Robinson says, "The doctrine of principles is extremely important to a Christian minister, and particularly in studying, first, the *sense* of Scripture as laying a foundation for doctrines; and, secondly, in studying the *letter* of Scripture, that is, the nature and principles of construing or expounding divine truth." But such principles of interpretation as our great biblical doctors recommend to students I shall not in this place either copy, imitate, or recommend, whatever I may do under any other Topic.† I am desirous of "leading you in a safe way wherein you will not stumble," and I hope in an easy way also. In

* See R. Watson's Theological Institutes, vol. i., part i., chap. 11, very excellent; and Owen on Heb. v. 4, p. 333, 334, &c.

† The whole of what follows on principles of interpretation must be considered in connexion with Lectures I. and IV., vol. i.

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figurative language our Lord was particularly copious. Such language nature loves. However, it was not to indulge us that our Lord employed it, but because there was a necessity for it as an inlet to such ideas as could not be received so well in any other way; and here I shall quote a passage from Dr. John Clarke in Boyle's Lectures.

The principles of all religion and goodness being laid in the mind and heart, the secret dispositions and genuine acts of which are invisible, and known only to a man's self (1 Cor. ii. 11), therefore the powers and operations of the mind can only be expressed in figurative terms and external symbols; the motives or principles and inducements to the practice of which being spiritual, such as affect men in a way of moral influence, and not of natural efficiency, the principal parts of which are drawn from a consideration of a future state, consequently these likewise must be represented by allegories and similitudes taken from things most known and familiar here below. And thus we find in Scripture the state of religion illustrated by all the most beautiful images we can conceive, in which natural unity, order, and harmony consist, as regulated by the strictest and most exact rules of discipline, taken from those observed in the best ordered temporal governments. Now, in the interpretation of places in which any of these images are contained, the principal regard is to be had to the figurative or spiritual, and not the literal, sense of the words. From not attending to which have arisen absurd doctrines and inferences, which weak men have endeavoured to establish as Scripture truths; whereas, in the other method of explication, the things are plain and easy to every one's capacity, make the deepest and most lasting impression upon their minds, and have the greatest influence upon their practice. Of this nature are all the rites and ceremonies prescribed to the Jews with relation to the external forms of religious worship; every one of which was intended to show the



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obligation or recommend the practice of some moral duty [he should have added, or to teach some important gospel doctrine], and was esteemed of no further use than as it produced that effect (Isa. i. 1. &c.). And the same rule may be applied to the rewards and punishments peculiar to the Christian dispensation which regard a future state. The rewards are set forth by those things in which the generality of men take their greatest delight, and place their highest satisfaction in this life; and the punishments are such as are inflicted by human laws upon the worst of malefactors; but they can neither of them be understood in the *strictly literal sense*, but only by way of analogy, as corresponding in the general nature of the thing, though very different in kind.—*Dr. J. Clarke.*

But independent of the able argument *à priori* here cited in favour of the mediate, mystical, or spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures, unless such interpretation be admitted, we cannot avoid one of two great difficulties; for either we must assert that the multitude of applications made by Christ and his apostles are fanciful and unauthorised, and wholly inadequate to prove the points for which they are quoted, or, on the other hand, we must believe that the obvious and natural sense of such passages was never intended, and that it was mere delusion. The Christian will not assent to the former of these positions; the philosopher and the critic will not readily assent to the latter.*—*T. H. Horne.*

While man is in the body, he must receive his instructions through the bodily senses. He cannot of himself form an idea of any thing spiritual, but as it is compared to, and illustrated by, some material object. And this method of instruction God has followed in the Scriptures, both in the language and in the composition. The language is

* The subject of figurative language will be resumed in future Lectures; it was introduced into this Lecture chiefly to show that it is a principle of just interpretation

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entirely suited to man in his present state, every Hebrew word signifying, first, some material object, and thereby conveying the idea of some corresponding spiritual object. And the Scripture composition abounds with images and illustrations of divine things taken from nature. The evangelical prophet, Isaiah, is a remarkable instance of this kind of writing. He represents the various parts of the kingdom of grace under their expressive and familiar pictures in nature. He sets spiritual things as it were before our eyes, under the image which God has established in his created works, in order to bring them down to our understanding. And every illustration of this kind, being God's own application of things natural, must be considered as infallible truth. The spiritual application is as certain as the outward fact from which it is taken. God would not use the book of nature to illustrate the book of grace unless the illustration was just and instructive; for it is not consistent with his perfections to propose to his creatures what would deceive, or to reveal what would not tend to edify them.—*Romaine.*

Those Scriptures to which a spiritual meaning is to be attached, according to the idea alluded to, are very numerous. They are found in allegories, prophecies, ceremonies, institutions, tropes, idioms, figures of speech, resemblances, parables, allusions to secular affairs; and these spread themselves all over Scripture: when therefore the preacher has to treat of these, he must do it with a careful hand; and indeed he has great need of divine teaching, as noticed in regard to making observations. Here a wise discretion is to be exercised; it requires a truly spiritual and evangelical mind, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 14.

Perhaps it may not be improper to observe, in this place, that there are three kinds of writing in sacred Scripture,—

1. Such as may be understood in the plain literal sense,

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as the account of the creation,* plain history, plain commands, and interdictions; every thing that relates to such facts and circumstances as the human mind, independent of supernatural aid, is capable of comprehending. Here there is no occasion for unusual language, and none such is used. Now and then a figurative form of expression is employed, as in the sixth chapter of Genesis, "All flesh had corrupted its way;" still this is uncommon: it is rare, and breaks not the general rule. In general cases, as to this class of Scripture, the plain sense is to be regarded as the true meaning; and we must always remember that we are to take a sense *from* the Scripture, and not bring a sense *to* it; and this true sense is to be used in dividing upon the passage, or in quoting it by way of proof or illustration.

2. There are a great number of passages that seem not to terminate in the occasion and in the persons to whom they relate, but which have a double sense, as the births of Ishmael and Isaac, Gal. iv. and 1 Cor. x. Almost every thing that related to Israel in Egypt, as well as their sojourning in the wilderness and their settlement in Canaan, is of this sort.

There is, perhaps, no book of the Old Testament more

* "Some have dreamt of I know not what figures and allegories in that part of the Mosaic history which describes the creation; that, though *days* are mentioned, yet it is a figure to denote an indefinite period, as the time mentioned was too short for physical causes to operate to their ends, and therefore a day must mean a term of undefined duration. But in what manner the creation was conducted is a question about a fact, and like all questions about facts must be determined not by theory but by testimony, and, if no testimony were extant, the fact must remain uncertain. But the testimony of the sacred historian is peremptory and explicit. No expressions could be found in any language to describe a gradual progress of the work for six successive days, and the completion on the sixth, in the literal and common sense of the word "day," more definite and more unequivocal than those employed by Moses: and they who seek or admit figurative expositions of such expressions as these seem not to be sufficiently aware that it is one thing to write a history, and quite another to compose riddles," &c.—*Bishop Horsley*, vol. ii., p. 225, &c.

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admired than the book of Psalms, and no book is perverted more from its original principles. Instead of being applied to Jesus Christ, as it generally is in the New Testament, it is considered as relating only the experience of David, and is quoted principally to illustrate the joys and sorrows under the present dispensation. It is very frequently accommodated to justify the mere reveries of enthusiasts. A great part indeed records joys and sorrows, thanksgivings and complaints; but a greater than David, or any mere man, is most frequently intended.—*Balfour.*

Add to which a very great number of the prophecies, which plainly point to Christ, referred, in their first application, to eminent persons of the Jewish nation.

3. There are also numerous other passages the evident intention of which lead us from a literal to a spiritual sense. Things relating to our immortal spirits, its operations and change of state, are couched under expressions that belong to our bodies and our natural faculties. Our awful state by nature is represented by the leprosy, Isa. i.; our renewal in conversion by a new heart, Ezek. xxxvi.; the operations of the Spirit to this end, are compared to water that cleanses.

Where a word has several significations, in common use, that must be selected which best suits the passage of Scripture under consideration taken in connexion with its context; and not only so, but which also agrees with parallel passages in which there can be no doubt; and these parallels are of vast importance where the word or phrase under consideration is at all doubtful. For instance, the word *blood* may be adduced as an illustration of this remark. The great importance of this term, and its frequent use in the Jewish law, suggest a careful inquiry about it. "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood." "And without the shedding of blood there is no remission." The reason of consecrating the blood to God rather than any part of the victim is mentioned Lev. xvii. 11: "For

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the life of the flesh is in the *blood*, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."

Such is the harmony of the Old and the New Testament upon this subject, that no difficulty occurs in our studies. But still the word has many significations in Scripture. Sometimes it signifies the natural descent from one common ancestor, as Acts xvii. 26: "And hath made of one blood all nations of men," &c. Sometimes it is used figuratively for death: to "resist unto blood," is to resist unto death, Heb. xii. 4. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the ground." The term blood frequently refers to the death of Christ considered as an atonement for sinners; as, "Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him," Rom. v. 9. These expressions in the New Testament are an allusion to the typical blood under the Old; and we are taught to reason thus: "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God," Heb. ix. 13, 14. Again, "God has set forth his Son to be a propitiation, that we may have faith in his blood;" that is, that we may believe in the efficacy of his atoning sacrifice, Rom. iii. 25; Eph. i. 7; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. The blood of Christ is also represented as the procuring cause of justification: "Being justified by his blood," Rom. v. 9, means the merits of his atonement. In other passages sanctification is imputed to the blood of Christ: "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," Rev. vii. 14. The term used in this sense signifies the *consequent* blessings of the cross meritoriously obtained thereby. I beg leave to suggest that very great assistance will be obtained

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by the student's attention to the various definitions of words in Cruden's Concordance and in Brown's Dictionary of the Bible ;* and this advantage should never be neglected if the preacher means to preach from texts in which such important words or expressions are found ; it will be necessary during his probationary years, and while his library continues to be scanty.

We see, at every step we take, the great importance of a correct judgment in fixing upon the true principles of interpretation, by which alone we can "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." It is true there are difficulties; yet these may be surmounted by the means which God has put into our hands. We shall not therefore go to Rome to inquire what is the sense of the church upon Scripture; for, though the pope and his priests have assumed the expounding office, yet Luther evidently saw clearer than the pope into the true meaning of Scripture. I have the same hope of you all. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that though these things be hid from the 'wise and the prudent, yet thou hast revealed them to babes." A very learned papist says (though falsely), that such is the uncertainty and ambiguity of words and phrases in the original Scriptures, that it is impossible for any man to understand them, and that in this dilemma the only course that could be taken was to refer to the church.

However, we must take care to be consistent, and, in fixing upon a principle of interpretation, we must not make Scripture contradict itself, which we should do, in some cases, if we followed the strictly literal sense. If we were so to fix the principle of interpretation, we should abuse the passage, Matt. xviii. 8, 9; for it is contrary to Exod. xx.

* Upon important Scripture words there is an excellent and compressed work by the Rev. T. Wood, that will repay the purchase, published by R. Baynes. See also his Essays on Important Subjects, a valuable little work, printed by the Book Society, price 1s. 6d.

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13: nothing must be done to hazard our lives. Again, the sentence, "My Father is greater than I," must not be understood as contradicting another declaration, such as "I and my Father are one." The context and the nature of the discourse from which both expressions are taken (two main things always to be attended to) render it evident how they ought to be understood, namely, that the first was indicative of himself as man, the second of his proper divinity. Again, John xiv. 24, Christ tells his disciples that "his Father had sent him;" that is, in his quality of Messiah he was sent. Now as the sender is greater than he that is sent, so in this sense the Father is greater than the Son; but it certainly requires very little argument, and no sophistry, to reconcile this saying with the most orthodox notion of the deity of Christ, and to show that there is nothing in this and similar passages which may not be understood without opposing the declared intention of Jehovah, as it is expressed by Christ himself, "That all men should honour the Son *even as* they honour the Father." It must be obvious to every unprejudiced reader of the New Testament that the passages which speak of the person of Christ may be ranged into two classes, which can admit of no consistent interpretation but as they are considered as exhibiting the Saviour under the two very different aspects just named—the one class being applicable only to his manhood, and the other class containing a great many passages representing him in his true and proper divinity. These statements bring forward the great dispute between us and the Socinians, or, as they choose to be called, Unitarians; and every preacher ought to know the strength of his arguments against those who deny the divinity of Christ. Their ordinary mode of argument on this subject consists in taking up some passage which speaks of Christ in his human nature, and having proved that he was truly man (which of course it is not difficult to do), they very modestly jump to the conclusion

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that he is man only, thus contenting themselves with begging the question at issue. I have always thought it a forcible argument in our favour, and I may repeat it again and again, that, by the preaching of our doctrines, God does bless the word and convert souls; but by our adversaries' doctrine no conversions are realized, they merely catch some of our apostates or backsliders, and call them converts. However, we know that many of these are recovered, and become more firm than before; an instance we have in the Rev. Thomas Scott, of Aston Sandford, the commentator.

It is now generally acknowledged that Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture; and, among other methods in which this principle may be applied, the preacher will derive considerable advantage from comparing the language of his text with some synonymous expression, as Ezek. xx. 38: "I will purge out from among you the rebels and them that transgress against me;" now see Ps. cxix. 119: "Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross." What is meant in the first passage by purging is in the second explained by *putting away*—making a separation. This is often done in the present life, but will effectually be done in the day of judgment. And the same thing is meant by Isa. i. 25: "I will purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin." Notice likewise Isa. xliii. 21: "This people have I formed for myself," &c. Now, if we want to know what this formation means, turn to Isa. li. 1—3; there we find Abraham hewed out of a rock —a rude stone, to be squared, and polished, and made fit to be placed in an eminent situation in God's spiritual building.

To the young preacher especially, who, in consequence of a defective education and the want of suitable books, may meet with difficulties which he is unable readily to surmount, I would strongly recommend, in the first place, a most careful perusal of the Scriptures, with *these difficulties*

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*in view;* see whether many hard passages may not be easily understood, and especially doing this with serious prayer for Divine teaching: this is in the power of all students. There are I hope but few students who do not possess Cruden's Concordance. Here very valuable articles are given at the head of many important words; these heading pieces are collected by Cruden with very great care and judgment, from the lists that follow (these headings being made after the collections were formed); and by careful observations he investigated in how many different senses any particular word was used so as to agree with contexts, and the evident intention or scope of such passages, so that the true key of his headings is hereby obtained. Refer, for instance, to the words *flesh* and *spirit*, and it will appear what a vast number of distinct uses are made of these words, every one of which is taken out of the list, to our very great edification. And the student might try his skill on some words to which no such headings appear, and thus with no other book a great many difficulties might be surmounted, as to the meaning of single words. I have compared Cruden's definitions of the word *flesh* with those of the learned Campbell in his Dissertations, and find that Cruden is by far the more copious of the two.

But, in the next place, let a commentary be purchased by small savings. There are two works of this kind, neither of which is dear. The first is Brown's Self-interpreting Bible, which may be had for thirty shillings; here the advantage of copious marginal references is found. The other work is the Dutch Annotations in English,* which is to be obtained at a very moderate price, because its value is not known. But never procure books in weekly numbers, for this is paying even more than full price. Much may

* Also Annotations upon the Old and New Testament, by the joint labours of several divines, by authority, 1645, in Charles I.'s reign, which is very sound in doctrine.

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also be learnt from the best preachers of the day: a sermon cannot be heard from a well-informed preacher without giving some important intimation of the sense of Scripture; resulting not simply from his own reflections, but also from the assistance which he may have derived from a valuable library.

Now when it is considered how many general truths, sound doctrines, and wholesome practices, are to be founded upon these numerous passages *rightly understood*, a just explication must evidently appear to be of the highest importance. Is it not certain that for want of such just sense many errors creep into the church, which endanger men in their course heavenwards; or at least tend to produce much unsettledness of mind—much doubt and perplexity. What misery is thus entailed on man! This applied to any individual is bad enough; but how much greater the mischief when a teacher of divine things neither knows "what he speaks nor whereof he affirms," when he rashly presumes upon the meaning of Scripture, and utters that for the mind of the Spirit of God which arises only from the fumes of his own presumptuous spirit! But the meek, the humble inquirer, God will guide in judgment, and teach him his way; he shall not materially err, though he may not be what is termed learned. A long course of experience and observation has confirmed me in these conclusions, and I conceive myself justified in the preceding remarks on these principles of interpretation by the practice of the first preachers of whom we have any knowledge; I mean Ezra and his companions. "They read in the book of the Law of God *distinctly*, and gave the *sense*, and caused the people to understand the reading;" Neh. viii. 8. I may also add a sense of correctness is the true foundation of holy boldness in the pulpit: I do not mean a pert or dogmatical but a holy boldness, arising from a consciousness of truth and zeal to diffuse it, and pro-

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ducing perfect freedom from "the fear of man that bringeth a snare."

Besides the literal sense of Scripture there are the parabolic, the allegorical, and the typical senses, and to these may be added the spiritual sense, which are commonly treated of in critical works; but I would not carry away the mind of the student too much from plainer matters. For a time commentators must be resorted to. I would particularly recommend the young preacher never to recur in public to a doubtful sense of Scripture, but to let the difficulty lie on hand awhile. There is an amplitude of plain and edifying matters upon which to speak for a little time, and until satisfactory solutions can be obtained of what at present may appear to be of a doubtful character.

I am not without my fears that too close an attention to critical works has its evils as well as its benefits, by leading the student into a kind of labyrinth of criticisms and injunctions, or a circle of rules from which we hardly know how to break out. It is true a great mind can contemplate and profit by a number of particulars of these kinds; but very many teachers of Christianity cannot be called great, and if they were, the rules given would scarcely be necessary at all. Some persons, it is to be feared, contract such a fondness for these nice points, that the plainer things of the gospel do not retain that place in the study which the interests of their illiterate and less refined hearers require; hence perhaps the few hints which I throw out may be more conducive to general good, than if I had given the customary *quantum*, the whole routine, of such schemes of religious science.

There is still one other rank of principles helpful to a right interpretation of Scripture, and that is the principles of *common sense*. There are many high compliments paid to common sense, and every one lays some claim to it: it certainly will go far towards a right understanding of the

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Scriptures. Mons. Claude says, "Consult good sense;" upon which Mr. Robinson gives two anecdotes out of his inexhaustible store. The one cites the case of a gentleman who was disgusted with the common representations or meanings given by some expositors on a certain part of our Lord's temptation. He set a sensible little boy to read the fourth chapter of Matthew; and after he had read the fifth verse—"Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple;" he asked the little boy, How do you think the devil took Jesus and set him on a pinnacle of the temple? Why, sir, replied the little expositor, as you would take me up to the top of St. Paul's. He further says, "I know a minister who has a high opinion of a little common sense, and who frequently employed a poor illiterate old man to read the Scriptures to him, merely for the sake of finding what an ordinary understanding could make of Scripture. Read to me, John, said my friend, the fourth chapter of the Acts: he began to read and expound also—'*And as they spake unto the people;*'—Who spoke to the people? Oh, I see; Peter and John: the blessed apostles were not willing to eat their morsel alone; their master had said, 'Freely ye have received, freely give.'—'*The priests, and the captain of the temple, and Sadducees came upon them;*'—wicked priests always keep bad company; soldiers and unbelievers to keep them in countenance! What has the captain to do with conscience?—'*Being grieved that they taught the people*' to turn them from their iniquities,—Why! would not they make better servants, and better subjects?—'*And preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead.*' The apostles had too much love for the poor to puzzle them with words and disputes. They told the poor that they were to rise from the dead, and to be judged for the deeds done in the body; that not a proud priest, nor a blustering captain, but a compassionate Jesus, was to be their Judge; and that all this was proved by the resurrection of

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Jesus Christ himself from the dead, &c. From this poor man, though illiterate, the minister (my friend) declared that he had often derived considerable light into the meaning of Scripture."—*Robinson's Claude*, vol. i., p. 39, 40.

Such must ever be the dictates of good sense; but I confess I am not a little suspicious of a forgery. How comes this plain old man to have such covert spite against the priests?

Now having recited these very common interpretations, it is only right that I should give place to an author of a more learned character; to show that we have no prejudice against learned men, and to prove that some learned men employ common sense in exposition, as well as the characters just now introduced.

The quotation is from Bishop Horsley's exposition of Luke iv. 18, 19: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," &c.

"This day," said our Lord, "is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." The phrase "this day" is not I think to be understood of that particular Sabbath day upon which he undertook to expound this prophetic text to the men of Nazareth, nor "your ears" of the ears of the individual congregation assembled at the time within the walls of that particular synagogue. The expressions are to be taken according to the usual latitude of common speech. "This day," for the whole time of our Lord's appearance in the flesh, or at least for the whole season of his public ministry; and "your ears" for the ears of you inhabitants of Judea and Galilee, who now hear my doctrines and see my miracles. Our Lord affirms that in his works, and in his daily preaching, his countrymen might discern the full completion of this prophetic text, inasmuch as he was the person upon whom the Spirit of Jehovah was; whom Jehovah had anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, &c. Again, none but an inattentive reader of the Bible can suppose that these words were spoken of the prophet Isaiah himself.

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Isaiah had a portion, without doubt, but a portion only, of the Divine Spirit. In any sense in which the Spirit of Jehovah was upon the prophet, it was more eminently upon him who received it not by measure. The prophet Isaiah restored not, that we know of, any blind man to his sight; he delivered no captive from his chains. He predicted indeed the restoration of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, their final restoration from their present dispersion, and the restoration of man from the worse captivity of sin; but he never took upon him to proclaim the actual commencement of the season of liberation: which is the thing properly implied in the phrase of "preaching deliverance to the captives." To the broken-hearted he administered no other balm than the distant hope of one who in future times should bear their sorrows; nor were the poor in his own time particularly interested in his preaching. The characters therefore which the speaker seems to assume in this prophetic text are of two kinds; such as are in no sense answered by any known circumstance in the life and character of Isaiah, or of any other personage of the ancient Jewish history; but in every sense, literal and figurative, of which the terms are capable, apply to Christ: and such as might in some degree be answered in the prophet's character, but not otherwise than as his office bore a subordinate relation to Christ's office, and his predictions to Christ's preaching. It is a thing well known to all who have been conversant in Isaiah's writings, that many of his prophecies are conceived in the form of dramatic dialogues, in which the usual persons of the sacred piece are God the Father, the Messiah, the prophet himself, and a chorus of the faithful; but it is left to the reader to discover, by the matter spoken, how many of these speakers are introduced, and to which speaker each part of the discourse belongs. It had been therefore reasonable to suppose that this, like many other passages, is delivered in the person of the Messiah, had our Lord's authority been wanting for the appli-

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cation of the prophecy to himself. Following the express authority of our Lord, in the application of this prophecy, we might have spared the use of any other argument, were it not that a new form of infidelity has of late reared its hideous head; which, carrying on an impious opposition to the genuine faith, under the pretence of reformation, in its affected zeal to purge the Christian doctrines of I know not what corruptions, and to restore our creed to what it holds forth as the primitive standard,—under that infatuation which by the just judgments of God ever clings to self-sufficiency and folly, pretending to have discovered inaccuracies in *our Lord's own* doctrines; and scruples not to pronounce him not merely a man, but a man peccable and fallible in that degree as to have misquoted and misapplied the prophecies of the Old Testament. In this instance our great Lord and Master defies the profane censures of the doctors of that impious school. The text, referred to its original place in Isaiah, is evidently the opening of a prophetic dialogue; and, in the particulars of the character described in it, it carries its own internal evidence of its necessary reference to our Lord, and justifies his application of it to himself."

Now, though this quotation cannot conceal the bishop's learning and talent, yet there is nothing in it essentially above common sense.

The following is an example of common sense triumphant over the opinion of many very learned men in the reign of Elizabeth, which has been received and defended for three hundred years, viz., that the forty-fifth Psalm celebrates the marriage of Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter.

Read the forty-fifth Psalm with care, and tell me if you can any where find king Solomon? We find, indeed, passages which may be applicable to Solomon, but not more applicable to him than to many other earthly kings; such as comeliness of person and urbanity of manners, as ver. 2. These might be qualities, for any thing we know to the

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no sooner seated on the throne than he lost the greater part of his father's kingdom.

Upon the whole, therefore, it appears, that in the character which the Psalmist draws of the king, whose marriage is the occasion and the subject of this song, some things are so general as in a certain sense to be applicable to any great king, of fable or of history, of ancient or of modern times; and these things are applicable to Solomon because he was a great king, but for no other reason: they are no otherwise applicable to him than to king Priam or Agamemnon, to king Tarquin or king Herod, to a king of Persia or a king of Egypt, a king of Jewry or a king of England. But these circumstances of the description which are properly characteristic, are evidently appropriate to some particular king, not common to any and to all. Every one of these circumstances in the Psalmist's description of his king, positively excludes king Solomon, being manifestly contradictory to the history of his reign, inconsistent with the tenour of his private life, and not verified in the fortunes of his family. There are, again, other circumstances which clearly exclude every earthly king; such as the salutation of the king by the title of God, in a manner in which that title is never applied to any created being; and the promise of the endless perpetuity of his kingdom. At the same time every particular of the description, interpreted according to the usual and established significance of the figurative language of prophecy, is applicable to and expressive of some circumstance in the mystical union between Christ and his church. A greater therefore than Solomon is here; and the corrected Bibles give as the title of the Psalm, "The majesty and grace of Christ's kingdom," &c. *Horsley*, vol. i., p. 82.

On taking a retrospect of the whole matter introduced under this twelfth Topic, the student will, I doubt not, be fully convinced of the importance of studying prin-



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ciples, in order that he may be able to apply them with propriety and advantage in the elucidation of truth, and will be prepared to devote no small portion of time and attention to this object. We have seen that the Topic is well adapted to occasional remarks by way of exposition or comment; and from the examples which have been quoted, you can be at no loss of applying the Topic to the more extended service of division, or of a whole discourse. What has been said as to the principles of interpretation may indeed be considered as of a somewhat oblique use of the Topic. Similar liberties I have before taken, and I feel myself justified in so doing, so far as it may tend to your improvement. The quotations in the latter part of the subject require no apology. Their value will sufficiently justify their introduction.

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# LECTURE XVII.

## TOPIC XIII.

### CONSIDER CONSEQUENCES.

THUS you may explain the doctrine of God's mercy. It is expedient (at least sometimes) to remark the *good* and lawful uses which we ought to make of it. These uses are, to renounce ourselves; to be sensible of our infinite obligations to God, who pardons so many sins with so much bounty; to consecrate ourselves entirely to his service, as persons over whom he has acquired a new right; and to labour incessantly for his glory, in gratitude for what he has done for our salvation.

You may also observe the false and *pernicious* consequences which ungrateful and wicked men, who sin that grace may abound, pretend to derive from this doctrine. They say we are no longer to consider justice now we are under grace; the more we sin, the more God will be glorified in pardoning us; this mercy will endure all the time of our lives, and therefore it will be enough to apply to it at the hour of death; with many more such false consequences, which must be both clearly stated, and fully refuted.

It is much the same with the doctrine of the efficacious grace of the Holy Ghost in our conversion; for the just and lawful consequences which are drawn from it are, 1. That such is the greatness of our depravity, it can be rectified only by Almighty aid. 2. That we should be humble,

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because there is nothing good in us. 3. That we should ascribe all the glory of our salvation to God, who is the only author of it. 4. That we must adore the depths of the great mercy of our God, who freely gave his Holy Spirit to convert us.

You must remark at the same time the abuses and false consequences which insidious sophisters draw from this doctrine; as, that since the conversion of men is by the almighty power of God, it is needless to preach his word, and to address to them, on God's part, exhortations, promises, and threatenings; that it is in vain to tell a sinner it is his duty to turn to God, as without efficacious grace (which does not depend upon the sinner) he cannot do it; that it has a tendency to make men negligent about their salvation to tell them it does not depend on their power. These, and such like abuses, must be proposed and solidly refuted.

Moreover, this method must be taken when you have occasion to treat of the doctrines of election and reprobation—the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ's blood—and, in general, almost all religious subjects require it; for there is not one of them all which is not subject to use and abuse. Take care, however, when you propose these good and bad consequences, that you do it properly, and when an occasion naturally presents itself; for were they introduced with any kind of affectation and force, it must be disagreeable.

In general, then, this way of good and bad consequences ought to be used when there is reason to fear some may infer bad consequences, and when they seem to flow from the text itself, for in this case they ought to be prevented and refuted, and contrary consequences opposed against them.

To proceed, this is the converse of the preceding Topic. In tracing "principles" we consider the word or action of the text as an effect or consequence, and our reflections are

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directed backward to the cause in which it originated. "Consequences" lead the view forward: if our text records the conduct of any who have gone before us, either as an example for our imitation, or the contrary; we may point out the effects, or the good or evil consequences, which actually followed such conduct, as far as they can be traced in the records of Scripture: if it contain a precept, an exhortation, a caution, &c., our Topic leads us to show the natural tendency or the divinely appointed issue of the practices to which it refers.

Suppose, for example, that you are discoursing on the character of Abraham, and particularly on his prompt obedience to the divine commands, you may remark the consequence of his obedience, and show that the declaration of the psalmist, "In keeping his commandments there is great reward," is frequently verified in an eminent degree, not only in the peace and satisfaction which result from a consciousness of having acted under the direction of an infallible counsellor and an unchanging friend, but even in the consequences immediately resulting from such a course of action. When Abraham was about seventy-five years of age, God commanded him to leave his father's house. "He went out," leaving his country and his connexions, "not knowing whither he went," and became a sojourner in a strange land. But it is quite manifest from the brief sketches of Scripture that he lost nothing by forsaking all: the hand of the Lord was with him; he was rendered prosperous in his circumstances; he enjoyed a large portion of domestic happiness; all the land in which he sojourned was granted by divine promise to his posterity; above all, he was favoured with communications from God which assured him that he was an object of regard to him whose favour is life, whose loving-kindness is better than life itself. The most remarkable instance of his obedience was the offering up of his son—at least in intention—as a burnt sacrifice. Though Isaac was the son of his

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old age, the only son of his beloved Sarah, the son of promise, and the fountain of many blessings, yet he hesitated not, at the divine command, to give him up; and in consequence of this evidence that he feared God, the divine promise and covenant engagements were renewed afresh, and ratified by oath: "By myself have I sworn, *because* thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, *because* thou hast obeyed my voice," Gen. xxii. 1—19. If, on the other hand, you were pointing out the sinfulness of parental indulgence, or of neglecting to employ parental authority, from the character of Eli; you would remark that even the piety of Eli did not prevent the evil consequences of his conduct in this respect, &c.

The consideration of consequences is certainly a Topic which has great power over the mind of man; and even the most abandoned and reckless of the species are not altogether proof against the arguments which may be founded on it. Most men are willing to forego the enjoyment of a present good or to submit to a present evil, if by these means they may avoid future evils or secure future benefits of greater magnitude. Hence it is that the man of business rises early, sits up late, and eats the bread of carefulness, that he may escape future privation and embarrassment, or secure future ease and independence. It is true indeed—lamentably true—that multitudes who are very careful in weighing consequences as they may affect their worldly interest, are as regardless of the more solemn and momentous consequences which affect the interests of the soul: they are concerned to act wisely in relation to time, but in relation to eternity their conduct is characterised by the most consummate folly. This however by no means

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proves that the Topic is less adapted to affect the mind and influence the conduct when extended to spiritual and eternal things; but it does prove the deep depravity of the human heart, since it arises from a secret disbelief of the plainest statements of God's word. Men flatter themselves that such tremendous consequences as the Bible declares will not follow their disobedience and impiety. Their language is (at least the language of their heart, as expressed by their actions), "We shall have peace though we walk in the imagination of our hearts," notwithstanding God has declared that "there is no peace to the wicked." They hope in some way or other to escape the doom of the wicked, without giving up the indulgence of their own hearts' lusts, though Christ has said "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." They are unwilling to reflect on a subject so gloomy, or to have their present pleasures interrupted by the apprehension of misery to follow; and therefore put the subject far from their thoughts, as if they imagined that God would not regard his own threatenings.

Now, if this be the case, how important is it that the ministers of Christ should be skilful in the employment of our present Topic! If arguments drawn from the consideration of consequences should fail, by what avenue can we hope to reach the heart? How are the great purposes of our ministry to be answered? How can we commend ourselves to the consciences of men as in the sight of God? Our sermons may be heard with pleasure, but, as to the effect of our ministry, we shall never be gladdened by the eager inquiry, "What shall we do to be saved?" Men may derive an intellectual gratification from a well-arranged discourse; the elegance of its diction, the harmony of its periods, the beauty of its imagery, may fascinate their minds and procure their plaudits; but unless this Topic is brought home with power to their hearts, no spiritual benefit will be realized.



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I am not to be told that, however faithfully and skilfully the subject may be pressed on the attention of our hearers, we must not expect that our representations will ever persuade them to "flee from the wrath to come," and to "lay hold on eternal life," since it requires a divine power to turn sinners from darkness to light. It is true of all the means which we employ, in order to win souls to Christ, even though divinely appointed, that of themselves they are *inadequate;* but is it therefore of little consequence whether or not they be *adapted?* Is there nothing in the suitability of the means by which the Spirit of God is pleased to work? Does not the Spirit operate by softening the heart and inclining the mind to attend to those things which his servants declare? How was it that Lydia was brought to the knowledge of God? Let the evangelist instruct us: "Whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." But if the things which Paul declared had not been adapted to impress upon her the importance and necessity of looking to Christ for salvation, though her heart was opened to attend, yet she had heard that sermon in vain. We need only refer to the parable of the prodigal son in order to see what considerations they are which the Spirit of God presses home to the heart of the sinner, and by which he is led to return unto God with weeping and supplication. How did the prodigal reason? "When he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger: I will arise and go to my father." Why arise and go to his father? What could have induced the resolution but an expectation founded on the well-known kindness and compassion of his parent's heart, that he would be received into the peaceful family, and enjoy the blessings of his father's house? There is a somewhat similar passage in Hosea ii. 7: I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now." No man ever truly

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begins to repent of sin till he is convinced that it is not only evil but bitter in its consequences: Ps. cxix. 59.

If then this view of the subject be correct, the Topic is not one to which it may be proper merely to refer occasionally, which is the case with some others, but it should have a place in some form or other in almost every discourse; in uniform application, particularly, it occupies a principal place. It may also be remarked that this Topic does not require that close reflection or patient research which appears necessary to the judicious application of the former Topic. Here a heart truly alive to the glory of God and the value of immortal souls, and a familiar acquaintance with Scripture, are the chief requisites. The Scriptures abound with appeals to consequences in a great variety of forms, which not only set before you the most perfect examples, but likewise furnish both matter and language; such passages, for instance, as Prov. vi. 27, 28; Eccl. xi. 9; Prov. i. 24—31, will sufficiently exemplify this remark.

I shall now proceed to lay before you an example, not of division, but of close reasoning upon the Topic; premising, however, that some few of the thoughts introduced are arranged in a different order to that in which they are placed by the author, and that some trifling verbal alterations are also made. Dr. S. Clarke on Gal. vi. 7: "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

The arguments proper to persuade men to the practice of virtue, drawn from the abstract consideration of the nature and reason of things; from the intrinsic beauty and excellency of virtue, and the deformity of vice; from the usefulness and proper tendency of virtue to promote the general welfare of men even in this present state, and the mischievous consequences of wickedness and debauchery to the world: arguments, I say, of this kind, in their

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proper place and season, to generous and considerate minds, and in suitable circumstances of things, have in them a real weight of truth, and carry along with them, when impartially attended to, an undeniable force of rational conviction. But in a corrupt and confused world, where the wickedness of some hinders the virtue of others from producing its just and natural effects; where the understandings of many are perplexed and puzzled; where the best are frequently hated and persecuted, even for the sake of their very virtue itself; and where the wills of men are strongly biassed to evil: in such a confused state the most universally proper and only effectual arguments are those which are drawn from the final consequences attendant upon their conduct. Some persons, indeed, there are, who will pretend that virtue ought to be chosen for its own sake, and that when it is practised through hope of reward, or fear of punishment, it ceases to have the nature of virtue. But in this they greatly err. For though virtue is indeed very excellent and amiable in itself, and what a reasonable agent cannot but always acknowledge to be his duty to choose; yet, if God had not annexed to it any sufficient encouragement to support men effectually in that choice, it would follow that the nature of things, and the final dispositions of Providence, were an inconsistency; it being indeed neither possible nor truly reasonable that men by adhering to virtue should at any time lose their lives, if thereby they were to deprive themselves eternally of all possibility of receiving any benefit from that adherence. Hence the ancient worthies in Scripture are never blamed but commended for seeking a better country, that is, a heavenly; and even Moses had "respect unto the recompence of reward;" nay, and our Lord himself, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hence

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also the apostle employs the language of the text as an argument to persuade men. Let us therefore proceed to consider,

I. The fundamental doctrine here stated; that every man shall finally receive of God according to what he has done: "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." This maxim is the reason and end of all laws, the maintenance and support of all government, the foundation and ground-work of all religion. In matters of less importance, and in opinions of particular and more minute consideration, which depend on the truth of many collateral notions, there will always be room for difference of apprehension, and many errors possibly may be of small consequence. But this doctrine of rewards and punishments finally proportionable to men's behaviour, is a truth of the same certainty and of the same importance with the acknowledgment of the very being of God, and of the natural and essential difference between good and evil. For which reason the apostle in the text, by a very lively and expressive figure, represents it under the similitude of things which have in nature the most immediate and necessary connexion: "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." And what our Saviour alleged upon another occasion, to express the reasonableness of judging concerning men's hearts from their actions, may no less properly be applied here, as a rule for every man to judge from his present actions concerning his own future state: "Men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles." As the fruit is always of the same kind with the stock that bears it, and the grain reaped is necessarily of the same sort with the seed that was sown; so men's final state of happiness or misery shall be the proper and correspondent effect of their present actions. "He that soweth to the flesh," as the apostle expresses it in the words following my text, "shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." In

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the present time we frequently see this in some degree verified, in what we usually call the natural course and consequences of things; for in this present life, besides the benefits of virtue to mankind in general, and the destructive consequences of vice to the world, the happiness of every particular man's own mind has necessarily a very great dependance upon that consciousness of good and evil which unavoidably attends his actions.

The apostle's similitude therefore in the text, not only in general is a certain and infallible truth, but is also a truth which has in itself a more immediate and necessary connexion than men are usually sensible of. It is not only true that God has actually set before men such and such promises and threatenings; but it will no doubt be found true also, at the final issue and event of things, that he has appointed, by as close and regular a connexion in morals as in naturals, that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap also."

In the natural and material world the more observations men make, and the greater accuracy they arrive at, and the longer periods of time they are able to take in, the more clearly and distinctly do they discern that; in the innumerable variety of the works of God, all things conspire uniformly, with the most exquisite exactness, to produce (and that sometimes out of the greatest seeming confusion) the properest and most regular effects. The moral world is of infinitely greater importance; it is that for the sake of which the material world was created, and without which this beautiful and stupendous fabric of the inanimate universe is nothing. It cannot be doubted then, by any reasonable person, that the same wisdom which, in the unintelligent works of nature, has shown forth itself in the contrivance of such inexpressible aptnesses and proportions of things, will much more in the government of rational beings (which are in a far nobler and more proper sense the subjects of God's power and kingdom) show forth

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itself finally in making every event, through a wonderful variety of different dispensations, terminate at length in most evident and illustrious manifestations of perfect justice, goodness, and truth.

However therefore melancholy pious persons may be sometimes tempted almost to despond, when they observe how Providence in the present time suffers all things seemingly to go alike to all, yet in reality their reward is laid up for them with God, much more certainly than grain, which in the winter seems to lie dead in the earth wherein it was sown, may yet be depended upon to bring forth fruit in its season. The Psalmist expresses this very emphatically, Ps. cxxvi. 6: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." The figure is the same with that in the text, and the literal meaning of it is well expressed by the author of the Book of Wisdom, ch. iii. 4, and v. 15: "Though they [the righteous] be punished in the sight of men, yet is their hope full of immortality; for their reward is with the Lord, and the care of them is with the Most High." And by the apostle himself, Rom. ii. 7: "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality," to them God will give "eternal life." And therefore he exhorts, Heb. x. 35, "Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward: for ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise: for yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." And St. James in like manner, ch. v. 7: "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

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On the contrary, however presumptuous and careless persons may deceive themselves with numberless vain imaginations, expecting to "reap where they have not sown, and to gather where they have not strawed;" yet as certainly as the nature of things is unvaried, and the perfections of God unchangeable, the final issue of things in the future state will be universally what Job observes it to be sometimes even in the present state: "I have seen that they who plough iniquity and sow wickedness, reap the same: by the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils they are consumed." Job iv. 8.

This therefore is the first particular observable in the text. The apostle here lays it down, as the general and fundamental doctrine of true religion, that every man shall finally receive of God according to what he has done: "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

II. The fact here intimated; viz., that every opinion or practice that subverts this great and fundamental doctrine, is in reality a mocking of God.

1. Because it is confounding the necessary reasons, proportions, and consequences of things. Indeed, what is it else but men's taking upon themselves to be wiser than God, and presuming that the consequences of things ought not to be what they are, or what he has declared they shall be?

2. Because it is entertaining very dishonourable and very injurious apprehensions of the perfections and attributes of God himself.

3. Because it is perverting the whole revelation of Christ, and attempting to overthrow the whole design of his religion; Matt. xvi. 27; Rev. xxii. 12; 2 Cor. v. 10. Whosoever attempts to elude these plain declarations, by imagining any other rule whereby men shall be judged, does in reality make a mockery of religion; or, as the apostle expresses it in the text, mocks God and deceives himself.

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III. The caution here given: "Be not deceived."

There are many deceitful considerations which, without due care, will be apt to draw men into the destruction which the apostle here admonishes us to avoid.

1. Some deceive themselves by a general carelessness and inattention. They pursue the ends of ambition and covetousness, they labour continually to gratify their passions and appetites, and consider not at all that "for all these things God will bring them to judgment."

2. Some content themselves with a loose and general expectation that they shall fare as well as others, disregarding the voice which declares, "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished."

3. Some trust to the rightness of their opinions, and are wise in their own eyes, though not washed from their filthiness; but the language of the apostle, 2 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, shows that such persons deceive their own souls.

Several other considerations are mentioned, under the influence of which men put away the fear of future consequences, and mock the threatenings of God; but enough has been quoted for our present purpose. I have only to add, in this place, that in lecturing to your people you may employ this Topic in various ways with effect. Every thing that is reprehensible may be shown to be attended with evil consequences; every thing that is good may also be referred to consequences, for "godliness is profitable for all things." The consequences of yielding to temptation, and of relaxing in the ways of God, it will often be necessary to point out; and also those that will certainly follow upon a patient continuance in well-doing: Hos. vi. 3; Rom. ii. 7—11. You may remind them of the fact that God's ancient people, the Jews, evidently fell or rose, enjoyed prosperity or suffered adversity, as consequences of their respective conduct; and that the primitive churches fared well while they preserved the simplicity of the faith, but fell into utter ruin upon their declension. You may

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appeal to their own experience: what good consequences always followed their conduct when regulated by the revealed will of God, and how easily most of the evils of which they complain may be traced to some causes in a part of their history which cannot be forgotten, because it lives in the sorrows which it occasioned. You may also remind them of the divine goodness in averting many deserved evils, and of the divine faithfulness in fulfilling the word of grace upon which he first caused them to hope. Joshua took up this Topic with great effect in his dying exhortation to all Israel, Josh. xxiii., xxiv.

Besides the broad and general view of our Topic which has been considered in the foregoing pages, there is also another mode in which it will demand your attention, viz., as it includes the inferences derived from any truth, or the considerations which by natural consequence follow from any doctrine, &c.;* and it is certainly of great importance in subjects of controversy, and such as are more particularly liable to abuse. We must so speak and write as to leave no just ground for the objections of our adversaries; and if they charge our opinions with bad consequences, we must not only refute such charges, but also set in array the good consequences that must follow upon the reception of them. We may also point out the evil consequences which the notions of our opponents seem to us to involve; but this must be done with fairness and candour, otherwise you will probably establish what you intended to refute, or at least subject yourselves to the charge of substituting railing accusations for temperate and scriptural reasoning. On this view of the subject you may likewise refer to the twenty-first Topic, "Suppose things."

Instead of pursuing the Topic further in its original character, I shall now turn aside to establish some counsels upon it, which I hope will not be without their use, even as

* See Lecture on Propositions.

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exemplifications of the Topic; and if, in the prosecution of your future labours, the following remarks should be the means of guarding you against failure by a timely consideration of consequences, my end will be obtained, and you will escape many a rock on which others have fallen, some of whom have sunk to rise no more.

There are two things in particular to which I entreat your attention: in the first place, remember that an attention to the consequences which your conduct involves should regulate you in all your engagements and pursuits; and secondly, never suffer the consideration of *present* consequences to deter you from the faithful discharge of known duty, or induce you in any degree to compromise your principles.

First, an attention to consequences is necessary in all your engagements and pursuits. This consideration of consequences is termed wisdom, prudence, foresight. Hence Solomon says, "The prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished." If you wish for a more full definition, read the book of Proverbs throughout; for here, as Dr. Watts has observed, you will find maxims of prudence more in number and greater in value than in all the sages of antiquity put together.

Permit me here to remind you that the whole of human life is but one concatenation of causes and effects; every action and every imagination of man has its consequences, many of which extend to eternity. These necessarily follow the act to which they respectively belong; nothing need awaken surprise; nothing here occurs too early or too late; nothing comes without being sent for, or brings a wrong tale when it comes. This is true as to the natural course of things; but still reservation is to be made for the controlling acts of a superintending Providence. God often mercifully averts evil, or turns thoughts and actions from their direct ends, and makes them bend to his

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own purposes: this is so manifest from Scripture, and from common observation, that we may leave the thought to its own protection. But, I say, generally, every act and every thought has its natural and direct consequence, in evil or in good. And is not this the hinge upon which free agency and moral accountability turn? Have we not here an avenue to honour or infamy? Hence it was said so early as the first age, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest ill, sin lieth at the door." It is as silly as it is wicked to say, "Let us do evil that good may come;" and it is unscriptural and anti-evangelical to say that the gospel relieves us from these responsibilities. The apostle Paul either observed or anticipated this disposition to error, and says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." The purest principles of free grace do not interrupt this order of things, but run exactly parallel with it; otherwise we might conceive, as the Stoics did, that God and fate were the same thing, so that, happen what would, there was no one to hear our prayers, or to occupy a "throne of grace;" nay, upon that principle, responsibility might be ingulfed, as well as all hope lost. But the free-grace actions of a Christian accord perfectly with moral responsibility. Grace in the heart disposes but does not force to that which is good; and the happy consequences which follow, even with regard to the believer in Christ, bear some proportion to his obedience as the fruit of faith; while his sins are constantly attended with painful consequences, which remain a dreadful mortgage upon his spiritual inheritance, though his estate shall not be forfeited. Our Christian philosophy strenuously maintains this point; and thus by the gospel and its free-grace principles, moral responsibility is honoured and confirmed.

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Without entering into an extended detail of different actions, and their respective consequences, we may just glance at a few particulars, in which the consequences of our conduct may be considered, both as they may terminate in ourselves, and as they may involve others.

1. The consequences of our conduct require consideration as they may affect ourselves. For example,

1) The exercise and cultivation of the gracious dispositions of your minds towards God, will always be followed by great personal advantages. Here true happiness is enjoyed: delivered from annoying evil passions, "the peace of God keeps the heart and mind through Jesus Christ;" while love and praise assimilate us to the divine likeness, which is the very essence of bliss, differing only in degree from that enjoyed above. These are the divine harbingers of eternal peace and tranquillity: "Great peace have they who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." The hallowing of God's sabbaths and institutions carries a blessing into every day of the week; and, while harmony and sweetest concord prevail within, the noise of the world is heard as remote commotions of the elements. The believer's "heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." "Though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waves thereof roar and be troubled; though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof; there is a peaceful river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God."

On the contrary, "there is no peace to the wicked;" the indulgence of carnal and ungodly dispositions is followed by loss and disadvantage; by bitter reflection, and forebodings of future consequences of a more serious nature. The breach of God's sabbaths and venerable institutions brings a curse with it; and the highest prosperity of the world cannot secure the trangressor from a thousand disquietudes. A dreadful sound may invade one ear, while the charms of music salute the other; while Belshazzar

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revelled in luxury, a hand writing upon the wall made all his joints to tremble. And whether these consequences are immediate or remote, they are equally certain and dreadful.

In each case the dispositions of the mind lead to their proper respective issues to the individuals possessing them, by a sovereign appointment that cannot err, or be controlled.

2) The habitual exercise of temperance and self-denial cannot fail to produce the happiest consequences to ourselves. "This is but putting a wholesome restraint on the very worst principles of our nature." It is the knowledge of our best interest, and the means of securing it: it is the holy determination of our will to the will of God, instead of the will of the flesh: it is to sow to the Spirit, to live independent of a never-satisfied appetite. Besides peace of mind, this is generally followed by health of body, which it is one of the surest means of promoting. This is also the way to that noble independence to which those who waste their substance in "riotous living" must be utter strangers; while this temperance of body contributes its full share to the vigour of the mind. The apostle Paul was a noble example of Christian temperance (1 Cor. ix. 27), which there can be no doubt contributed to spread a lustre over his whole character.

But self-gratifications and acts of intemperance, lust, or intoxication, these very rapidly bring poverty, sorrow, and disease. It would seem almost an offence to name such things, considering the persons I am addressing; but those who know the depths of Satan, the deceitfulness of sin, and the frailties of our nature, will not think cautions unnecessary. Therefore, I say, "flee youthful lusts," carnal and fleshly appetites, "which war against the soul." Beware of small indulgences; the most shameful excesses have commenced in what we call innocent indulgences; particularly many a preacher has become a drunkard by kind

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friends administering ardent spirits after preaching: this is, to say the best of it, a cruel piece of kindness. Other very kind friends will give an invitation, and will importune to something beyond temperance: thus the Lord's people become tempters of one another. These baits are too often successful to the ruin of the preacher and the scandal of the cause. Now, my dear friends, take care of these tempters and these tempting things; put your eyes and your palates under a very strong law: weak laws manifest weak governors. It is a common saying that "parsons love good eating and drinking." I had rather it were said, Parsons are the most temperate of all mankind. And how favourable this is to studies upon divine things, you know very well. Now what I wish of you is this: Consider consequences.

3) In considering the personal happiness which springs from a well-regulated course of conduct, I cannot omit the habit of industry; no man is so happy as the truly industrious minister. I think acquisition has an irresistible charm to an ingenious mind; here its luxury is found, and here its truest treasure. But to secure this end, too much time must not be given to sleep, to talkative impertinent friends, to visiting, to politics. Inroads made upon your time will be like the Amalekites; they will consume even the property you have with much care collected together.

An idle minister not only robs himself of one great source of delight, but on every emergency he must be ever scraping together what others have written and said; and will secure no other reputation than that of a retailer of scraps, ill assorted and worse put together.

The Turks say "that a busy man may be troubled with one devil, but the idle is tormented with a thousand." "The most sluggish of creatures, called the potto or sloth, is also the most horrible for its ugliness; to show the deformity of idleness, and, if possible, to frighten us from it." Idleness has no memorial; every thing parishes with him

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except the rags he leaves to his heirs. Some of our greatest writers would have left no vestige of their greatness if they had not been aroused from their habitual idleness by a very powerful motive; for they never wrote a line until they were starved to it; and, strange as it may appear, there are preachers who would never compose a sermon if their belly did not crave it of them. Such people are driven to duty like lazy school-boys, but the industrious man is always ready for his work. Now, my brethren, as to industry and idleness, consider consequences.

> "Be wise, then, Christian, while you may,
> For swiftly time is flying;
> The idle man that sleeps to-day,
> To-morrow will be dying."

Think of the imperishable name that industrious ministers have obtained, such as Owen, Manton, Howe, Tillotson, Gill, Pool, Doddridge, Henry, &c. If the works of these men had never seen the light, yet they had been happy in their labours, for "*labor ipse voluptas.*"

2. We should consider consequences, because most of our acts involve others, as well as ourselves. This consideration is more particularly applicable to public men; every act of a king, of a privy counsellor, a senator, a judge, a general, a physician, or a minister of God's word, has a good or bad effect on others: on the pilot depends the safety of the passengers, on the captain their comforts, on the minister, under Christ, devolves the care of immortal souls: good or bad doctrines, good or bad examples, lively or frigid services, his knowledge or ignorance, his love or indifference, his wisdom or his folly, passes over to the people, or is ingrafted on the congregation by an almost necessary consequence. I do not say that a minister forms the character of the people altogether, but he bears an important part towards it. Hence the apostle Paul says, in a style and manner of unusual solemnity, even for him: "Take heed, therefore (ye under shepherds of Christ), to

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yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God which he has purchased with his own blood."

I now beg leave to refer to such a general state of your thoughts as I conceive will be the best security for the correctness of your public acts, as ministers of the gospel. A correct course of thought will produce a correct course of conduct; if, therefore, you would have any actions worth a memorial beyond the moment that produced them, consider the consequences of your thoughts, and that "a good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things." This is the irreversible order of things, and Solomon says, "out of the heart are the issues of life," the issues of wisdom, and the streams of usefulness. It is a difficult thing to get people to begin here. It is too generally the fashion to commence with the regulation of their acts; and though some respect may here be had to the word and will of God, and the opinions of the pious, yet it is like an attempt to cast something into the stream to make it pure, when the purity of the fountain should be the first object of regard. Our Saviour says, "Make the tree good, and then its fruit will be good also." From this source "all that makes a figure on the great theatre of the world, the employments of the busy, the enterprises of the ambitious, and the exploits of the warlike, the virtues which form the happiness and the crimes which occasion the misery of mankind, originate in that silent and secret recess of thought which is hidden from every human eye."—*Dr. Blair.*

Now, my brethren, see that your thoughts are deeply impregnated with the love of Christ and of precious souls. Of this love it may truly be said, *à cœlo descendit.* Universal benevolence is very expressive of the word love, though it falls short; it is correct in this, that it expresses an act of the will strongly bent upon a good design. This



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sets a Christian upon devising schemes of benevolence: "The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand." Now, when a scheme is devised, well conceived, a very benevolent, much-needed scheme, the next thing is to devise means that shall fit us for it, and to carry it into execution in the wisest and most effective manner. Your present preparatory studies for the ministry are of this nature, and you are to consider the consequences that will follow upon these means being wise or unwise.

Here, however, I must interpose a caution: there must be no delay. This caution has, indeed, been long since given: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;" set about it directly; "delays are dangerous." Oh how many schemes have been lost or marred by delays! It will be time enough to-morrow, to-morrow, and to-morrow, is a tune that lulls us to sleep; it is then we dream, "When I awake I will seek it yet again." A scheme suspended is a forlorn hope—to-day it is legitimate, to-morrow it is bastardized. I thought thee fair and lovely, but now thy charms have vanished. I have no doubt but Shakspeare's "Tide in the affairs of men," like the chief of his admired sentences, was borrowed from the Scriptures.

But to return to consequences, in reference to your preparatory studies. If you devote your time to studies that will yield comparatively no profit, that will not have a direct tendency to your usefulness to your hearers, that can at best only add some embellishments or ornaments to you as polite preachers; the consequences of such an unhappy employment of time will be severely felt by those whose benefit you profess to seek. If, for instance, you spend that part of your time upon the study of the learned languages, which ought to be given to the attainment of the first principles of preaching, there will be a sad perversion of things. The art of conveying instruction is in this case the "one thing needful;" and you may be a workman that need not be

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ashamed though you are acquainted with no other language than your mother tongue. A critical knowledge of the languages was of great importance at the time of the Reformation, and is still of importance to academic tutors; to those who address learned hearers; and especially to those who have the care of the great outworks of our common Christianity, though even in this last case fitness consists more in the natural faculty of reasoning than any thing else. But to the majority of preachers the learned languages are secondary accomplishments only. Their business is to preach Christ, and to lay a solid foundation, in the first principles of our faith, among the great bulk of our immense population, nine out of every ten of whom are dazzled, rather than instructed, by what is called a luminous discourse.

But if, on the contrary, you, in the first instance, bend the energies of your minds and give your thoughts to become useful men, the consequences will be most felicitous. In this course be wise, patient, and persevering; and if, after these objects shall be obtained, some further acquaintance with the languages can be acquired without interfering with pulpit exercises, or too much interrupting your lawful engagements, there can be no objections.

Give your thoughts very closely to the best examples wherever they are to be found, and this will supersede the necessity of my touching upon several things which might here have obtained a place. You will see the love and benevolence that directed your blessed Lord; his were "thoughts of mercy and peace." "What love through all his actions ran!" What labours and self-denials did it lay upon him! So that even in this view it were well for us to "look to Jesus." Nothing but his spirit, I mean the mind that was in him so eminently, can ever do great things.

Secondly: Never suffer the consideration of *possible con-*



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*sequences* to deter you from the faithful discharge of known duty, or induce any, even the smallest, compromise of your principles. This is no more than saying, Consider consequences in their widest range, as they include the whole of your existence. Yet this caution may not be unnecessary. Our views of consequences are apt to induce unwarrantable fears: "There is a lion in the street;" and here is the check that philanthropy and benevolence receive. "The principle (say these over-cautious ones) is good, but its practice is sometimes attended with danger; many have lost their worldly comforts—their good name—nay, their lives have been sacrificed to it." Now, if universal approbation, profit, and advantage spread the sails, all-propitious seas invited embarkation, and rich mines awaited our arrival out; then we should have as many philanthropists as fortune-hunters; they would, however, be of a most suspicious character; and where virtue and true worth was to be found in the crowd, nobody could tell. But now things are by infinite wisdom put upon a better footing. Here is a fair trial of principle, of courage, of true Christian fortitude and magnanimity. Here that noble daring to be singular —that intrepid purpose which nothing can intimidate or turn aside—finds its exercise. Here distinction of character is fairly marked out, and rewards of a suitable nature, at a suitable time, will be conferred by an unerring hand to those who by faith and patience will wait for it, and who, in doing what is right, are fearless of consequences.

We must also distinguish between possible and imaginary consequences. Upon the first we may make a tolerably accurate calculation; but upon the latter we may be like children going to bed, afraid of ghosts and hobgoblins, when we ought to commit ourselves to God: "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established." Such consequences as these may affright us: If I follow such a course I shall be persecuted, or at least laughed at; I shall be called one of the saints; or, if I preach in such a manner,

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I shall displease the people; if I preach such a doctrine, I shall give offence; or if I speak thus faithfully, such a character will be offended, and he has the principal direction or is the chief support of the place. Now these and many such like fears we ought to discard altogether: "He that hath my word let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?" Our Lord spoke some very severe things against these improper fears: "I will tell you whom ye should fear; fear him that has power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him." For in the first place the thing apprehended may never come to pass; or, instead of your fortitude and courage being a drawback upon your interests, your interests may thereby be promoted.* The lines of an overruling Providence are here so often visible that no mistake need be made; the timorous are ruined, the bold are saved and blessed, even in this world.

Nothing is more common than for those who look at near consequences, without sufficiently weighing the future, to defeat their own purpose: presuming upon consequences, that they certainly will happen in such a particular way, is the vice of ardent minds, and often becomes a source of subsequent regret; we may presume upon nothing but what God promises.† As to taking a settlement over a

* In the reign of Charles II. a court was to be held at Winchester. The king was to be lodged with one of the clergy, not very high in rank, but whose house was commodious. He was very happy to receive the king, but he most positively refused to admit Nell Gwynne, the king's mistress. He was deaf to all entreaty and remonstrance, or representation of consequences; refuse he did, and another lodging was provided for the lady. Some time afterwards a valuable bishopric was vacant: interest was made for this and that great divine, but the king inquired, "What is the name of that little fellow at Winchester, that would not admit Nell Gwynne into his house? He is an honest fellow, and he shall have the appointment." —*Bishop Horne's Essays.*

† A preacher of high celebrity had at one time prepared a discourse with which he was enraptured. Every hour was a day till the happy time should come for its delivery; when lo! instead of the bliss he had anticipated, he felt his mind in a state of wretchedness and barrenness. He looked at the clock with anxiety for the moment

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church, presuming upon present appearances, many too hastily engage themselves, trusting to new and untried friends, the fair speeches of weathercock hearers, who will extol you to-day and defame you to-morrow. Know therefore, as much as possible, "what is in man," and presume not upon the continuance of favourable gales.

The balancing and comparing of contrary consequences is often too delicate a thing for our management; and too much of this balancing will very likely end in forming a cunning character—a selfish disposition. It is the safest way to take all the care possible to ascertain whether our thoughts and devices be right, suitable, and seasonable; but, if we must proceed to balancing, let selfish considerations be wholly lost sight of, and an undue weight in favour of present things, taking Moses for our guide, who chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for (in balancing his account of consequences) he had respect to the recompence of reward."

that would permit him to hide himself from the disgrace which he supposed he had incurred by such a total failure. Now, though his anticipations were not realized in the precise way he expected, yet good was done by the sermon; for one of his people sought him out whither he had retired to vent his lamentations, and addressed him in some such words as these: "Oh! Sir, you have, under God, been made the means of restoring my soul to comfort." "Well," says the minister, "whatever it may have done for you, I know it has brought great trouble upon myself, and I am perfectly ashamed of my sermon."

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# LECTURE XVIII.

## TOPIC XIV.

### REFLECT ON THE END PROPOSED IN AN EXPRESSION OR ACTION.

ALTHOUGH this is not very different from the way of principles, of which we have already spoken, yet it may afford a variety in discussing them.

If, for example, you were speaking of justification, in the sense in which St. Paul taught it, you may observe the *ends* which the apostle proposes, as,

I. To put a just difference between Jesus Christ and Moses, the law and the gospel; and to show, against those who would blend them together, and so confound both in one body of religion, that they cannot be so united.

II. To preserve men from that pharisaical pride which reigned among the Jews, who sought to establish their own righteousness, and not the righteousness of God.

III. To take away such inadequate remedies as the law by way of shadow exhibited for the expiation of sins, as sacrifices and purifications; as well as those which pagan superstition proposed, such as washing in spring water, offering victims to their gods, &c.

IV. To bring men to the true and only atonement for sin, which is the blood of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Scriptures not only offer to our attention the most interesting facts, and the most vivid exhibitions of

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character, which in themselves are quite easy of comprehension, but also many things of greater difficulty. Some passages, which as teachers of others it is highly important for us to understand, have, through lapse of time, contracted a dubious character. For example: from our present ignorance of ancient manners, and of the peculiar turn of thought which was formerly familiar on several subjects, an obscurity arises in the sense of some texts; and in order that we may fix correctly on the truths which they exhibit, and render them, so to speak, tangible to the people, we must use all the means which lie within our reach. Reference to the original text, collation of different translations, lexicons, dissertations, commentaries, &c., will frequently afford valuable assistance. But I am convinced that those who have not the opportunity to avail themselves of such helps, may make very considerable proficiency in the study of even the more difficult parts of Scripture, by a close attention to the considerations suggested by the several Topics, and particularly that which now demands our attention. This is in fact a master-key to the understanding of many things in profane as well as in the inspired writings; and hence the maxim of Pope—

"In every work consult the author's end."

Claude's illustration of this Topic, as quoted, is quite sufficient to show its importance, and perhaps sufficient also to assist the well-furnished student in applying it with advantage. But to those whose resources are more slender, a few general remarks, as exemplifications of the Topic, will, I doubt not, prove acceptable. I have had occasion to point out a similarity between some of the Topics, but I confess I do not perceive, in the present Topic, that similarity to the Topic of Principles which Claude intimates. He says, "The end proposed is not very different to the way of principles, though it may afford variety in discussing them." But I humbly conceive that there is a very

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great difference. The principle of a word or action is its philosophy, its rationale; it fixes the mind on something in which such word or action originated, or in consequence of which a thing is so said or done, and here it terminates: but the end proposed has a different province, and fixes our thoughts on the final object which the word or action was intended to promote. The former supposes that the true meaning of a text is already clear, and its object is to show the justness, propriety, or excellency of it, &c., and to generalize a particular subject. The latter proposes to assist in discovering the true meaning of a text by referring to the intention of the writer, the end which he had in view.

When treating on the twelfth Topic I observed that the Scriptures, as a whole, proceed on the principle that man is a fallen and degraded creature. Let us now examine what is the end proposed in the inspired volume generally. It certainly has its end as well as its principle, though perhaps in such a comprehensive view it is difficult to be precise enough to be edifying, and difficult to preserve the eye from diverging, because the object is large, and one will think the centre here, and another will say, nay, it is there. However, it may be sufficiently correct for our present purpose to observe, that the main design of the whole Scripture, or the end proposed by Jehovah in imparting to sinful man this revelation of mercy, is that he may reconcile sinners unto himself, and raise them from their present degradation to glory, honour, and immortality. See Rom. xv. 4; 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. Hence it is that a Saviour is the great object every where exhibited. In types and shadows, in the descriptions of prophecy as well in the New Testament records, he is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the sum and substance of all holy writ. This he himself declares, John v. 39, 46; and certainly if there had been no covenant of redemption



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—no covenant of grace in Christ—we cannot suppose there would have been any Scriptures at all.

If any difficulty presents itself in the interpretation of any book of Scripture, or its minuter parts, it may generally be solved by our present Topic. Because, as every writer had some design, some end which he proposed to himself, and as it is not to be supposed that he would express himself in terms foreign to that design, it is reasonable to suppose that all his words and phrases are such as were every way suited to his purpose. To be acquainted therefore with the scope of his writing, or the end which he had in view, is to possess a key to all he says. This, it has been well observed, is the soul or spirit of a book; and that being once ascertained, every argument and every word appears in its right place, and is perfectly intelligible; but if the scope be not duly considered, every thing becomes obscure, however clear and obvious its meaning may really be. "Hence how unfair, how irrational, how arbitrary is the mode of interpretation which many apply to the word of God! They insulate a passage, they fix on a sentence, they even detach it from the paragraph to which it belongs, and explain it in a sense dictated only by the combination of the syllables or the words in themselves considered. If the word of God be thus dissected or tortured, what language may it not seem to speak? What sentiments may it not appear to countenance? What fancy may it not be made to gratify? But would such a mode of interpretation be tolerated by any living author? Would such a method be endured in commenting on the admired productions of classical antiquity? Yet in this case it would be comparatively harmless, although utterly indefensible; but who can calculate the amount of injury which may be sustained by the cause of revealed religion, if its pure streams be thus defiled?"—*H. F. Burder.*

Begging the student to remember that we are only treat-

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ing of a few difficult passages, and that we still maintain that the chief parts, say forty-nine parts out of fifty, have no need of scope, or any thing else of the kind, to make them plainer than they now stand in the sacred text; we observe that the scope of an author is either general or particular: by the former we mean the end which he proposed to himself in writing his book; by the latter, the end which he had in view when writing particular sections or even sentences which his book may contain; and we unite them together in design, because the same rules will apply to the whole and to its parts.

The scope or intention of a book of Scripture, as well as of any particular section, may generally be collected from some one of the following sources:

1. From the author's express mention of it in some part of his book. Thus the wise man declares, at the beginning of his books, that the design of the former is to teach wisdom, Prov. i. 1—4; and that of the latter to set forth the vanity of all earthly things, Eccles. i. 1—3. Sometimes this is found in other parts of the book, as 2 Pet. iii. 1, 2: "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in which I stir up your minds by way of remembrance," &c. Thus also John, in the gospel which bears his name, says: "These things have I written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through his name." In all such cases we have the most satisfactory assurance respecting the great end which the sacred writers had in view; and whatever is doubtful or ambiguous must be explained in a sense corresponding with their professed design.

2. From some declaration which exhibits the reason or occasion of any portion of a book being written: as at the beginning of many of the psalms, which are so plain as to require no citation. The language of the apostle, in the seventh chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, is of this kind: "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote

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unto me," &c. Here we see that it was not the intention of the apostle to write against marriage generally, but to recommend celibacy rather on the principle of expediency, as more suitable to the distressed and persecuted state of the church. The notion of celibacy which the Romanists collect from this portion of the word of God, arises therefore from a mistake as to the apostle's general design.

3. From considerations arising out of the state of the people to whom the writing was originally addressed: according to the tenth and eleventh Topics, vol. i., p. 486, &c., of these Lectures. Thus you will discern the scope of the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews, in the distressed state of the people addressed. It was a state too trying for some weak members of the scattered church, and quite trying enough for the strongest. Apostasies had occurred, and seemed likely to recur; he therefore assembles all the high considerations to form his subject which were likely to affect and to preserve those that were left to him. This view of things will also equally suit the epistle of James and the first of Peter; and in preaching upon or from these epistles it will sometimes be necessary to point this out to the people: perhaps making it the matter of the exordium.

4. From the known errors of the times. After these had been the subject of warnings by the Spirit of prophecy, they became the subject of animadversion in the true spirit of the ministry. Now, besides other instances, it is sufficient to notice the apostle's epistle to the Galatians against the return to Judaism; or that of St. John against antichrist in his first hideous form. It is hence we perceive the force of many expressions as well as their true meaning; and at the same time we have examples how to animadvert on the errors of the present times.

5. From some conclusions expressly drawn from any argument. These are very frequent in the apostolic writings, and possess the same force as the express mention of their

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design. Thus Paul says: "Therefore we see that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Christ;" from which conclusion it is quite evident that the apostle did not mean to lead us into an expectation of being accepted or justified by our works, but simply through faith in Christ. Hence we see that works are to follow faith, and not to lead to the object for which faith is established.

6. From the general drift and tenor of a book, which must be ascertained by an extensive and well connected view of a whole epistle, &c. This is confessedly difficult, but in some cases it is necessary. Mr. Carpenter lays down this point highly to his own credit and the benefit of the student:—"Such epistle should be read, and re-read, from beginning to end; and it is preferable to use a copy in this case where the text is not divided into chapters and verses." If this cannot be had, let the student dismiss from his mind, or prohibit his eyes from the observance of such divisions; for they are but of modern date, and have their evils as well as their benefits. "Such epistle should be read as we would peruse an epistle from a friend; and that three or four times over, without interruption, until the whole letter becomes clear. From this perusal, re-perusal, and repetition of the document, we shall obtain a right knowledge of the scope the author had in writing it, and an acquaintance with the general argument of the epistle. For, as it has been well remarked, the composition of every such work, however loose and imperfect, cannot have been fortuitous; we know that by some exertion of mind it has been put together, and we discover in its connexions, such as they are, indications of the purpose for which the exertion was made. According to the tendency of the composition may the reference be safely made to its purpose." These remarks will generally apply; but in some cases might not the apostles write so much for general purposes as to preserve no connexion in the parts

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of an epistle that might lead to its elucidation from a reference to the general tenour of the whole? I cannot see any one particular end proposed by Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians, though the parts of which it consists, and the apostle's intentions in introducing them, are clear enough; and the same may be said of the Epistle to the Philippians. In no other way, indeed, does Mr. Roberts, in his valuable Key to the Bible, discover a scope in the former epistle.

Wherever a particular design or intention can be discovered, in any of the ways just mentioned, it will generally furnish observations calculated to illustrate the meaning and force of the passage to which it refers, and ought by no means to be overlooked; and, whether we use a passage as the foundation of a discourse or as a quotation only, it must never be used in any sense inconsistent with such design. As there is what we call common honesty in commercial affairs, so there is such a thing as common honesty in pulpit affairs; and it becomes us never to handle the word of God ignorantly or deceitfully. It is true we may practise upon the weakness and credulity of a congregation; there may be no spies or informers; the fallacy may be received and swallowed down with avidity, as a wholesome Scripture truth; and there may be a people so vitiated in their taste and understandings as to look out for men who will, by such manglings of Scripture, provide them with the only venison they can relish; but where is truth all this while? Alas! the truth is not in the text or the quotation, separately, but in the scope of the whole context or book.

If, however, no particular scope be apparent, our interpretation of doubtful passages must be governed by the general scope of the whole New Testament—the truth as it is in Jesus—the analogy of faith; and having mentioned the analogy of faith, I shall here take the opportunity to add that it is a kind of appeal to the whole testimony of sacred

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writ, as St. Paul, in reference to the sentiment or doctrine he was writing about, appeals: "But what saith the Scripture," &c., Rom. iv. 3, &c. Here he rests his argument upon the general basis of Scripture. Mr. Horne defines this analogy to be the constant and perpetual harmony of Scripture in the fundamental points of faith and practice. He says it is what St. Paul calls "the proportion of faith." and which should be translated the analogy of faith. To the same effect many commentators interpret St. Peter's maxim (2 Pet. i. 20), that "no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation;" implying that the sense of any prophecy is not to be determined by an abstract consideration of the passage itself, but taking it in conjunction with other portions of Scripture relating to the subject—"Comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Cor. ii. 13): a rule which, though it be especially applicable to the prophetic writings, is also of general importance in the exposition of the sacred volume. And he quotes from Bishop Van Mildart three terms which appear to be synonymous with the analogy of faith, as Rom. ii. 20: "The form of knowledge; the grand scheme and draught of all true knowledge." Again (Rom. vi. 17): "form or mould of doctrine into which the Christians were cast." And lastly (2 Tim. i. 13): "The form of sound words." Upon the above observations the whole doctrine of analogy is built, and the student must proceed accordingly, praying earnestly for the teaching of the Holy Spirit, without which we shall always be in danger of perverting the truth, or of misapplying its several parts. The parallel passages will generally assist upon these points, and particularly the context should be regarded.

We have seen that the considerations suggested by this Topic are of great importance in determining the true meaning of the sacred writers; and perhaps I cannot better exemplify its use in sermonizing than by offering a few

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remarks on some of those institutions, the true nature of which can be understood only in proportion as the end proposed in their establishment is regarded.

First: The Christian ministry, as appointed by our Lord, falls so directly in my way that I cannot pass it over entirely. It should be our constant aim to preserve the office in its purity, and to be ourselves what our Lord and Master expects and requires us to be. What then was the end proposed in its establishment? Was it intended to form a hierarchy, a dominating power, governing according to the rules of civil policy? Did our Lord intend that it should be rendered subservient to the purposes of human ambition, that ministers should become lords over his heritage, and enjoy princely titles and princely revenues? If this be the case, you have certainly usurped an office to which you can lay no claim. But what does the Lord say? "My kingdom is not of this world." "Be not ye called rabbi, or master: for one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." These and other passages, and more particularly when taken in their connexion, certainly intimate that the gospel dispensation knows nothing of ecclesiastical rulers and a temporal head: indeed, had our Lord intended to caution his messengers against all such establishments, he could not have employed language more appropriate or forcible. The end proposed in the appointment of the ministry may be readily understood from the words of Christ: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." From this commission it is evident that the design of Christ was the promulgation of the truth by proper agents and suitable means. Nor are we left to discover by human wisdom either the character of the agents or the nature of the means to be employed; both are sufficiently pointed out in the New Testament: and we have only to look at the pages of eccle-

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siastical history in order to perceive the evil consequences of substituting human authority instead of the directions of God's word, and perverting the institutions of Christ from their original design.

The real power of the gospel coalesces only with its own simplicity, and every departure from that simplicity is of necessity injurious; we never saw a revival of piety but with the return of simplicity;* for though we have had new sects established by great and learned men, who have been very far from simplicity, yet it is a fact which may well bring down the pride of man, that every real revival of primitive Christianity has originated with men whose education and habits have circumscribed them within comparatively narrow limits;† and as soon as the reviving party, dissatisfied with its bounds, and the contempt usually experienced, breaks into the wide expanse of fashionable religion again, then the true character of Christ's ministers is once more lost in the crowd.

Here then is the rule of judgment as to Christ's appointment of the ministry, and the end proposed in it; whatever agrees with this end in Christian teachers is right, and all that does not agree with it is wrong; and no existing examples, however extensive and imposing, ought to have any influence upon us. Whatever be the opinions of mankind as to what respectability requires in the ministry, it is certain that true respectability will never be wanting

* Luther, Calvin, &c., upon the continent, and our Reformers in England, were all great and learned men; but they were not so much revivers of spiritual religion as reformers, correctors, purifiers of gross evils; they were great and honourable men, raised up and fitted for a particular purpose: but our reviving preachers have only to do with common ignorance, common sin, and unbelief; to preach Christ in all simplicity and faithfulness.

† The late very learned Horne Tooke, in his latter days, resided near Wimbledon, Surrey, not far from the spot where our itinerants had for some time preached with great plainness of speech. Mr. Tooke sent for them, and said: "Here is fifty pounds towards improving your chapel, and I will further give a life subscription; for I consider your manner of proceeding the nearest to that of the apostles of any thing that I have ever heard or read of."

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where the great end of the institution is kept practically in view.

Secondly: The end proposed in the sabbath, now called the Lord's day, deserves notice in this place. This is one of those positive institutions that connects itself so closely with the Christian ministry, that they must rise or fall together. Much may be done towards convincing a lax and degenerate people of the importance of the sabbath by our Topic, as Mark ii. 27: "The sabbath was made for man; not man for the sabbath." Man was made before the sabbath was instituted; hence we have the induction that settles the point, for "that which was instituted for the sake of another thing, must yield to the good of that for whose sake it was instituted;" hence our Lord's expression is justified. It is true the injunction of the sabbath has all the force of a moral obligation; for though as a positive institution it does not come to us under that notion, yet, as we are under a moral obligation generally to obey our Maker's expressed will, it comes to the same point as if it had been originally of a moral nature. In our Lord's expression, however, the morality of the observance is not formally insisted on, but only the end proposed—the good of man in his fallen state. It is a boon of heaven, a high and distinguished privilege, without which man's moral character and religious identity would soon sink into that barbarism which actually exists among all people who are either in a state of ignorance, or who wilfully neglect its obligation and advantages altogether. If therefore the preacher wishes to see his congregation full and respectable, he will preach upon the end proposed in the Lord's day (for this is the proper Christian appellation), and urge it by all the arguments that can be drawn from man's personal interests, and the gracious design of our Lord in giving his sanction to its observance, in his honouring the two first days of the two first weeks subsequent to his resurrection with his own immediate presence and blessing, as

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we collect from the gospel history. Here we see that the perfected scheme of salvation stands connected with our Lord's resurrection from the dead on the first day of the week, without which there could have been no gospel to preach, no acceptance with God of any service whatever, whether of a moral or positive nature, such as we could render in our fallen state. Now the announcement of the Lord's day, and the announcement of salvation, are heard in perfect harmony; while the very institution itself is the fairest type of that eternal sabbath of rest which all desire to obtain, but which those only will enjoy who are disciplined into all the uses and benefits of the Lord's day on earth.

If therefore we are to subdue the vulgar notion that the observance of the Lord's day is a painful yoke, it must be by the present Topic; by showing that the institution was made for man, that it is not an arbitrary appointment, nor a useless exertion of wanton power, contrived only to display the authority of the master, and to imbitter the subjection of the slave; but a kind and benignant indulgence, to be called on this day into the more immediate presence of our heavenly Father, to know his will, which is only another term for our happiness. This plan is commonly more likely to succeed than harsher language, than even moral argument; for, as Bishop Horsley observes (to whom I am indebted for some ideas in this article), "our Saviour's method of instruction was not by delivering a system of morality, in which the formal nature of the moral good should be traced to the original idea of the seemly and the fair; the foundations of our duty (or its principles) discovered in the natural relations of things, and the importance of every particular duty demonstrated by its connexion with general happiness. This was not his method of instruction, because he well knew how long it had been followed with little effect; for abstruse speculations, whatever they may have at the bottom of solidity and truth, suit

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not the capacities of the many, and influence the heart of none. He took therefore that course which experience pointed out to be the easiest way to persuade, as well as the shortest; by putting the question on the footing of advantage."

Thirdly: The end Christ had in view in his two ordinances, of Baptism and the Supper, is of great importance to a correct appreciation of their nature. With regard to the former, I take it for granted that your minds are pretty well made up as to its object, mode, and expediency. But as to the latter, there being a diversity of opinion about its real object and nature, I am not willing to defer it entirely; the following are what I consider the errors existing upon the subject:

The Roman Catholics say that in the mass they perpetuate or renew the sacrifice of Christ, alleging the words "This is my body," "This is my blood." The reception of the literal sense of these words however would lead to an absurdity as great as that he really was a "vine," or a "door." I think we only want a little common sense to see that this gross perversion of a passage of Scripture is only resorted to in order to establish a system which could not subsist without it. A great share of the revenues and theatrical pomp of the Romish church is derived from this doctrine. The rule to judge upon such a passage is, before we can conclude upon the sense of a text so as to prove any thing by it, we must be sure that such sense does not involve a contradiction. Revealed truth may be above reason, but that which is contrary to reason can no more be true and agreeable to the revelation contained in the sacred writings than God, (who is the author of one as well as of the other, can contradict himself. Whence it is evident that the words of Jesus Christ, "This is my body," "This is my blood," are not to be understood in that sense which makes for the doctrine of transubstantiation; because it is impossible that contradictions should

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be true, and we cannot be more certain that any thing is true than we are that that doctrine is false.* Now, as we are making such strenuous endeavours to convert Catholics, these remarks may be useful. The ordinance of the supper is not a "bloody sacrifice."

Our English church calls the ordinance a sacrament, upon the supposition that in taking it solemnly at the altar we do implicitly vow our future obedience to Christ, or renew our baptismal engagement to that effect. If our vows were or could be of any value, if they could afford any security to our future pure and holy conduct, I think our sacramental idea would be very valuable; but such is the weakness of humanity and the power of temptation, and such the nature of a broken vow, that I submit whether it be not safest to retain the vow, but still with all might to resist evil with the advantages God gives us, and in the strength of Christ to do all that we can, even to the uttermost. But I conceive that the words of the institution do not warrant this term sacrament, however well intended. If ever there was or had been a time more important for a solemn engagement than others, the moment of the supper was such a time, when the apostles were about to pass into a situation of trial truly awful, and which in the event proved how unequal these disciples were to keep a vow inviolate. One would think our Saviour in compassion saved his disciples from the breach of a vow and its guilt together, by not enforcing it upon them. And it is clear that no solemn engagement was required at that time, nor do we read of any thing of this nature being added subsequently by the apostles, not even as a practice of expediency without injunction. I fear, if we were allowed to refer for the usage to the early ages after the apostles' time, we should open too wide a door to innovations; for it is certain that errors in abundance soon crept into the church. But I say all this with great deference to the eminent cha-

* T. H. Horne.

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racters of our church who have written and defended the term. However it is now pretty generally agreed that to take the sacrament as a qualification for office, and often by persons who do not usually appear to pay reverence to religion, is a very awful abuse and perversion of a sacred institution.* To me it appears that the Lord's Supper is purely a commemorative ordinance, and that the end in view on the part of our Saviour was to perpetuate his love in dying for us. "Do this in remembrance of me." This is inclusive of every thing we ought to do; it has all the force of moral obligation as well as of gratitude, and is exclusive of every thing else, even by way of amendment. In this case, as though our Lord foresaw how the future zeal of his people might go beyond his injunctions, he would impose a timely check to it in these expressive words, "Do this in remembrance of me,"—this do and no more: this being properly done will answer the purpose designed. It is officious to go beyond this plain precept, or to make it any thing else than commemorative. We must neither add nor diminish; for if we do either we indirectly cast a reflection upon the wisdom of the institutor.

Other divines call this ordinance eucharistical, and certainly I like this notion better than the sacramental. An eucharistical ordinance, or this notion concerning it, is adopted from the thank-offerings of the Jewish church. Most certainly a "thankful remembrance of Christ's death"† is very proper, but thankfulness is only an adjunct which ought to stand connected with all we do (Col. iii. 17); the ordinance itself is, and ought to be, memorative. Its type, the paschal-feast, exactly answers this idea. The Hebrew nation were ordered by the passover to preserve God's wonderful deliverance in their minds to all generations.

Others, to be quite sure, unite the sacramental and eu-

* The act of parliament imposing the sacrament on taking certain offices is happily now repealed.

† Church Catechism.

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charistical ideas, but here is no predominant point on which to fix the mind; comprehending so many ideas, the whole is weakened or destroyed. However, every one must think for himself; and I shall give presently a sketch of a discourse that treats of three distinct ideas. I think our national church, though she calls the ordinance a sacrament, yet fully admits the commemorative and eucharistical ideas; and, when it is considered how many there were to please at the Reformation, it is not wonderful that distinctness was lost to the view.

Fifthly: The purpose of God in calling his people out of the world, is worthy of your attentive consideration; you will have frequent occasion to refer to it in the course of your ministry, and it is a topic replete with instruction and encouragement to yourselves as "workers together with God." The end proposed by the Almighty is to save his people through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Hence it is declared that Christ "gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." In strict accordance with this the apostle Peter, addressing his Christian brethren, says, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;" 1 Pet. ii. 9. Though it is the people's care to exemplify this character, and to the people it was addressed, yet the formation of the character is instrumentally committed to the preacher; for it is he that is "to feed the flock of God" with such wholesome truths as are calculated to produce the character intended; by example, by precept, by representation, by excitement, by vigilance, to be always aiming at the end proposed. The faithful, anxious minister will sometimes be consulting with himself in some such manner as this: "What additions have I brought into Christ's church? What solicitude has been manifested to preserve them, to

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strengthen their graces, to increase their knowledge, to improve their holiness, to caution and arm them against danger? What increase of piety, of Christian love and zeal, has been produced by my discourses to them? Are the people more spiritual and heavenly in their conversation?" Now this is no small charge upon a preacher; it carries with it great responsibilities, so much so that thinking, conscientious men often cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

Now if their sanctification is the end proposed by Christ in calling his people out of the world, then this end will go with the preacher into the pulpit or desk, will suggest to him his duty there, it will direct him to topics of discourse, that he may be a helper together with Christ, the chief Shepherd, in bringing home his wanderers, and in supporting and cherishing the weak of the flock. He will thus be concerned to show himself a faithful servant at every hand; he will be eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, wisdom to the simple, and a friend to all. Here a reference may be made to the preface to these volumes.

I am aware that the preacher has, on entering the pulpit, a great many things to think of; still the claim before us, the end proposed, cannot be waved or lost sight of. This would be like the barrister abandoning or forgetting the interest of his client, or the ambassador omitting the main point of his instructions at a foreign court. Let therefore this thought be habitual, and the main point will be secured. The end in view, in preaching the gospel, was and is the calling of sinners to make them saints.

In the two preceding sections I have endeavoured to point out the usefulness of this Topic in assisting us to discover the true sense of Scripture, and, for the sake of illustration, have briefly considered the end proposed in the appointment of the Christian ministry, in the positive institutions of the gospel, &c. In what follows I shall proceed

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to lay before you some examples in which the Topic forms the ground-work of division. Much, however, as I love variety in the construction of a sermon, and much as I have endeavoured to promote it, I would not add this form to the rest, if I were not satisfied that it is well worthy of your attention; the following examples will, I think, be sufficient to show you that "the end proposed" will suggest the best mode of treating many subjects; while the particular end which you have in view must of course always regulate the form of division.

No. 1. Mr. Davies, of America, in treating on the subject of the Lord's supper, to which we have already referred, divides upon our Topic. The text is 1 Cor. v. 8: "Let us keep the feast," &c. The author insists on the end proposed in the ordinance in three particulars, viz.:

I. This ordinance was intended as a memorial of the sufferings of Christ for his people.

II. It was appointed as a badge of our Christian profession, and of our being united to him.

III. As a seal of the covenant of grace, both on God's part and also on ours.

These points he treats rather propositionally. The first part contains my sentiments; as to the second part, I always thought that it was baptism which stood for the badge of our profession, and I also think that baptism has more to do with the covenant alluded to than the ordinance of the Lord's supper. Baptism is, I think, the proper initiatory ceremony, and more fitly so the more public it is; but the Lord's supper was first celebrated with closed doors.

No. 2. Claude gives you the ends which the apostle Paul had in view in insisting on evangelical justification, viz.;

I. To preserve men from pharisaical pride.

II. To withdraw them from ceremonial observances.

III. To bring them to the true and only atonement for sin.



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No. 3. Blair, on Matt. xiii. 30: "Let both grow together until the harvest," treats of the mixture of bad men with the followers of God in the present state, and justifies the wisdom and equity of Divine Providence in permitting it, by showing that the real benefit of his people is the great end proposed in this permission. This he amplifies by considering the several subordinate ends which could not be so well answered if the tares were all rooted out by the vengeance of heaven. The following is an abstract of the doctor's sermon:—

The end proposed by Jehovah, in permitting the mixture of good and bad in the present state, is the real advantage of his people, which is thereby promoted.

I. In a way of discipline; for it constitutes a state of trial well calculated to improve the character of God's people.

1. As it exercises their passive graces.—Were there no bad men in the world to vex and distress the good, the good might appear in the light of harmless innocence, but could have no opportunity of displaying fidelity, magnanimity, patience, fortitude. In our present imperfect state, if goodness constantly proceeded in a smooth and flowery path; if, meeting with no adversary to oppose it, it were surrounded on every hand with acclamation and praise; is there no ground to dread that it might be corrupted by vanity or sink into indolence? This dangerous calm must therefore be interrupted; and wicked men are employed as instruments in the hands of God to rouse his servants from dangerous slumbers, to form them for the day of adversity, and to teach them how to suffer honourably.

2. As it serves to improve their active powers.—It gives occasion for their graces to shine with conspicuous lustre, and makes them appear as "the lights of the world" amidst surrounding darkness. Were it not for the dangers that arise from abounding iniquity, many of our active

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powers would find no exercise; there would be no opportunity for courage to act, for wisdom to admonish, for caution to watch, nor for faith to be exerted in "overcoming the world." The Christian is here to be trained and prepared for a paradise of innocence, and for the enjoyment of a perfect and faultless society; and the wisdom of Providence appears in making the errors of the wicked subservient to the improvement of the just. For this end, therefore, tares are suffered at present to grow up among the wheat.

II. In a way of instruction.—From the examples of wickedness by which they are surrounded, the children of God derive many valuable lessons.

1. They are thus admonished concerning the snares of Satan. Tracing the dangerous and slippery paths by which so many have been led from small beginnings to commit the greatest crimes, and thus insensibly betrayed into ruin, they are admonished to be upon their watch-tower—their views of human nature are enlarged—the sense of their imbecility is strongly impressed upon them, accompanied with the conviction of the necessity of constant dependance on an almighty arm. All the crimes which the servants of God behold disturbing society around them, are so many signals hung out to them, beacons planted in their view, to prevent their making shipwreck among the rocks on which others have split.

2. They are further instructed by the views thus exhibited of the evil and deformity of sin. The odious character of sin never appears in so strong a light as when displayed in the crimes of the wicked.

3. Thus also are they repeatedly admonished that it is an "evil thing and bitter to forsake the Lord." We need only open our eyes to behold the wicked tormented by their passions, and far removed from that sanctuary of calmness and tranquillity which is the abode of happiness. Practical demonstrations of the infelicity of sin are con-



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stantly exhibited in the example of evil-doers; and the misery as well as infamy of guilt is realized and rendered sensible to our apprehensions.

When therefore you contemplate the important ends which are advanced, by permitting the tares to grow together with the wheat, you behold how the ways of God may, in this remarkable case, be justified to man.

This example is well suited to our purpose, as it is evidently formed throughout upon the Topic. The text, however, seems intended to discountenance and to forbid the intermeddling hand of man, and would lead us rather to show that *man ought not* to attempt the extirpation of the wicked, than *why God does not* immediately destroy them. Some recent prosecutions in our law courts give importance to this subject. Are infidels to be permitted to blaspheme the name of Jesus, and to call his gospel a falsehood? Are our children and domestics to be poisoned in their principles by exhibitions of the titles of blasphemous books and advertisements in shop windows, and in the handbills that are thrown down into our areas? This is a very awful evil; it staggers us; our zeal fires, and we ask, shall these things be suffered? If Scripture is to settle the matter, it is settled: "Let both grow together until the harvest." If we prosecute, imprison, and fine these wicked characters, we do but follow the example and justify the acts of the inquisitionists. The zealous papist considers our doctrines as damnable as we consider those of Carlisle or Taylor. True, there is a difference, but in both cases there is an interference which is interdicted. Christ could preserve the vessel in the storm, and Christ can preserve his church against all enemies. He can even bring good out of evil, and ever does so; and "evil men and seducers" will try their skill upon the established Christian in vain.

My fourth instance is also from Blair, vol. ii., serm. 13, Eccles. vii. 2—4: "It is better to go to the house of

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mourning," &c. That is, viewing the end proposed, it is so. That end is the improvement of the heart: to this end the whole discourse inclines. It is a moral discourse, and as such his point is well sustained.

It is evident, observes the doctor, that the wise man does not prefer sorrow upon its own account to mirth, or represent sadness as a state more eligible than joy. He considers it in the light of discipline only. He views it with reference to an end. He compares it with certain improvements which he supposes it to produce; "for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." Now, if great and lasting benefits are found to result from visiting the house of mourning, these may be capable of giving it the preference to those seasons of fleeting joy which may be found in the house of feasting. A proper attention to the distresses of life is, however, well calculated to produce very important effects on our moral and religious character; for,

I. The house of mourning gives some check to levity.

II. It awakens sentiments of piety.

III. It arouses our sensibilities and sympathies towards sufferers.

IV. It gives seasonable admonitions to prepare for what may soon be our own state.

V. Excessive fondness for life will thereby be moderated.

No. 5. Blair also furnishes an example in which the Topic occupies one part of the discourse. Rom. viii. 28: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God," &c. Blair's introduction is very beautiful: "It was the opinion of many ancient philosophers that private and individual interests were sacrificed to the general good of all men. The gospel has opened to us a higher and more comfortable prospect. It assures us that, while Jehovah is ever carrying on the general system of

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things to its proper perfection, the interest of no one good man is sacrificed in any point to promote this end, but his life is at the same time a system complete within itself, where all things are made to conspire for bringing about his felicity."

His first division contains some remarks in reference to the characters designated in the text, and some explanation as to what the *good* is which is designed for them. On the latter subdivision he has some very judicious observations upon human sentiment as to what *is good;* for here many things appear good to some which do not appear so to others. In the second part the discourse opens into the Topic: The overruling power that directs all events to the end proposed—the final object in the events themselves.

In general this "working together for good" includes all that happens to good men in this world, every station and condition in which they are placed, every circumstance in their lot, from the beginning to the end of their lives. Nothing befalls them fortuitously; nothing happens in vain, or without a meaning; but every event possesses its proper and destined place, and forms a link in that great chain of causes which is appointed to carry on their improvement and felicity (the end proposed). As all the rivers upon the face of the globe, however circuitous they may be in their progress, and however opposite in their course, yet meet at last in the ocean; so all the seemingly discordant events in the life of a good man are made to preserve, upon the whole, an unerring tendency to his good, and to concur and conspire for promoting it at the last. What a noble and sublime view does this present of the supreme dominion of Providence, and of its care exercised over every righteous man!

To this end all prosperous circumstances, and, more to our purpose, all the evils of this life, were particularly

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designed to be subservient. It is certain that from the discipline of adversity the most salutary improvements of human nature have been often derived. In that severe school the predominant errors of the mind have been corrected: "By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." The man of God has by these means been trained up to fortitude of mind, improved in humanity to man, and formed to the habits of devotion and resignation to God. Nay, their very infirmities, their failings and errors, are made, by the powerful influence of God's grace, to contribute ultimately to their good. They are thereby instructed in the knowledge of themselves; and they are properly humbled by the discovery of their own weakness.

It is not merely said that all things prove good in their issue, but that they "*work*" for it. This imports that "all things" are so formed by God as to become active causes of happiness to those who love him. His infinite wisdom gives to things most unapt an aptitude and fitness to fulfil his own great ends, and makes dangers and evils his instruments for accomplishing the felicity of his servants. There is a certain operation and process always going on, by which, though we are insensible of it, all things are constantly advancing towards the end in view. In the same manner as the operation of natural causes, though slow and unperceived, is sure; as the seed which is sown in the ground is every moment unfolding itself, and though no eye can trace its progress, yet with a silent growth is preparing for the stalk and full ear, so, in the moral world, throughout all the dispensations of Providence, there is the same latent but certain progress of the seeds of virtue and holiness, tending towards perfection in the end. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart."

It is said in the text, not only that all things thus work,

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but they "*work together*" for good; intimating that they are made to conspire and to concur one with another for bringing about what is best on the whole. Taken singly and individually, it might be difficult to conceive how each event wrought for good. They must be viewed in their consequences and effects, considered in their dependencies and connexions, as links hanging together to form one extensive chain. It is by adjusting into one consistent whole the various events that fill up human life arranging in the happiest succession all the occurrences of that complicated scene, and bending to his purpose things which appear opposite and contrary, that the Almighty accomplishes his great plan in behalf of "those who love him, and are the called according to his purpose."

The end proposed could not be better exemplified than in the above instance, viz., the end which infinite Wisdom has in the afflictions and sufferings of the godly; and I hazard the opinion that Dr. Blair, who evidently paid his court to the Topics, did design to illustrate that now before us.

Before quitting this Topic, allow me to remind you that in all your discourses there should be some end proposed, to which the whole of your remarks should bend; particularly should this be the case in reference to such sermons as originate in particular occasions. Thus Mr. Robinson says: "Ordination sermons very properly turn on the *design* of God in establishing a standing gospel ministry, on the aims of bad and of good men in entering on the office, and so on. Funeral sermons are frequently composed on this plan; the design of God in afflictive providences, design of ministers in eulogizing the deceased, &c. Fast sermons, thanksgiving and commemorative sermons, are also with great propriety composed on such special views. In what are called charity sermons, in education sermons, or sermons recommendatory of schools for the instruction of the

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poor, and in missionary sermons, the end in view must be strictly preserved; for their utility greatly depends upon it. It is foolish to say every thing but what a man engages to say. Supposing the institution to be so good as to merit the engagement, it will surely furnish matter sufficient without the introduction of topics foreign from the immediate design. These sermons should all be contrived so that the main subject of the text leads almost necessarily, without any thing like forced or far-fetched inference, to a conclusion favourable to the institution whose interests you are called on to advocate.

Again: some of our highly-valued institutions are assisted by public meetings, for which a string of resolutions are to be spoken to instead of texts. Great good has been done in this way, both in reference to the assistance afforded to the funds of such societies, and also in regard to the salutary impressions produced on the minds of many who have attended their meetings. As it is not improbable that you will be called upon to speak upon some of these occasions, I am anxious that you should be able to acquit yourselves creditably; and in a short space I cannot do better than to say that, in order to this, you must avoid the faults and copy the excellences of the examples before you. You will observe that a preaching speech neither answers the ends of the committee nor pleases the people. The end in view requires good sense, Christian feeling, a lively imagination, a readiness to avail yourselves of any topic that occurs, either in the report or the opening speech, in an extemporaneous and free manner; for written speeches, delivered *memoriter*, seldom succeed well. Persons who habituate themselves to speak on the observational system (see Observational Lecture) make the best platform speakers, obviously the best, for the one is quite similar to the other. But the mere textuary is quite out of his element on the platform, and if he proceed at all he must *preach*.



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Occasional practice also in proposition will be useful here, because sometimes a point requires to be proved. However, some principal ideas may be secured beforehand; and these should be so judiciously incorporated with the current topics of the meeting, that what you may have previously concocted in your own mind may not appear to have been matter of study at all. The late Mr. Canning was very expert at this tact. Anticipating pretty nearly what would be said in the house, he prepared a great deal of subject, and then threw in his speech, so modified by the course of the discussion as to appear a perfectly off-hand affair. This is absolutely necessary if you desire that your speech should be well received.

You never, or very rarely, hear a sensible speaker allude to himself. Egotism is abominable: speak handsomely of every body else, as far as truth will allow, and leave others to speak of you. Anecdotes are quite fashionable; they often tell well, and that makes them fashionable: here a just taste will direct you whether it will be best to fly your anecdote, or keep it in the cage. Keep it in the cage by all means if you are a party in it, or say, as Paul said, "I know such a man," &c. I have heard a speaker entertain a meeting more than half an hour with a history of his benevolent visits to Newgate, to Bridewell, into cellars, garrets, &c.; and he took care to throw into his speech all the good things he said, and the vast convincing and converting power that his words had upon the poor creatures, and the subscriptions he raised for their relief; and concluded by intimating that he felt quite ready to go again upon exploits of the same kind, being most devoutly disposed to do all the good he could in his *humble* way. The speech is done; he waits to be clapped, sits down without it dreadfully mortified, and vows he will never attend such a meeting again. Now this is fulsome stuff; one is disgusted to hear a man thus blowing his own trumpet.

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It is an old observation, "Whenever you hear a person speak of himself, open both your ears;" for he will lay open his little self in a most diverting manner, and if he does not edify he will amuse you. But let the end proposed in calling the meeting be always uppermost in your thoughts, and you will not be in danger of offending by any intimation of your own consequence; and if you should not be so happy as to make the most eloquent speech, yet certainly yours may be the most closely appropriate of any. This is, in fact, the best praise.

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# LECTURE XIX.

## TOPIC XV.

### CONSIDER WHETHER THERE BE ANY THING REMARKABLE IN THE MANNER OF THE SPEECH OR ACTION.

For example: "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us;" Rom. viii. 37. You may remark, that there is a more than ordinary force in these words, *more than conquerors;* as they express an heroical triumph. He does not simply say, We bear our trials with patience; he not only says, We shall conquer in this conflict; but he affirms, *We are more than conquerors.* It is much that faith resists trials without being oppressed; it is more to conquer these trials after a rude combat; but to affirm the believer shall be *more than a conqueror* is as much as to say, he shall conquer without a combat, and triumph without resistance; it is as much as to say, he shall make trials the matter of his joy and glory (as the apostle says, "We glory in tribulation,") considering them not as afflictions and sorrows, but as divine honours and favours. This was also the apostle's mind when he wrote to the Philippians, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." He considers sufferings as gifts of the liberality of God, for which the faithful are obliged to be thankful. So in this other passage, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers,

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nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." You may here remark the heroism and magnanimity of St. Paul. His faith seems to defy all the powers of nature. He assembles them all—*life—death—angels*, &c. to triumph over them, and to exult in their defeat. This language marks a full persuasion of the favour of God, and an invincible confidence in his love.

Such remarks as these may be made upon many expressions of Jesus Christ, wherein are discovered dignity and majesty, which cannot belong to any mere creatures, as when he says, "Before Abraham was I am." "Whilst I am in the world I am the light of the world." "All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them." "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." "Whatsoever ye ask in my name that will I do;" and many other passages of the same kind.

Although the manner in which any sentiment is expressed or any action performed may be considered as circumstantial only, and our first care should be directed to the doctrine or practice to which any passage of Scripture may lead, yet the propriety of noticing whatever is remarkable in the style of expression, &c., found in Scripture, must be obvious to all who reflect on the subject. Frequently indeed the whole force of a text of Scripture is lost by overlooking some emphatic word. The illustrations given are correctly to the point, and deserve the student's attention; but they are merely hints upon this important subject, and all that can be added in these Lectures will amount to no more than a few additional hints upon which the student may improve by his own reflections. In order to discover the additional force which peculiarities of expression require or convey, little more is necessary than careful attention: though some knowledge of the original languages

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will afford valuable assistance, and it is highly desirable that every preacher should learn at least so much of the elements of Hebrew and Greek as may enable him to profit by consulting the lexicons. Baxter's Comprehensive Bible is also a most excellent help for this purpose, far superior to any thing of the kind ever edited before; it forms the best pulpit Bible in Europe, and considering its value we ought not to complain of the price; I think every congregation ought to furnish it.

The manner of expression in every language is called its idiom, its cast, its phraseology. In Scripture these peculiarities (chiefly Hebraisms) are very numerous; some of them are collected together in these Lectures. Sometimes the energy of a sentence lies in a single word, and that a monosyllable. Such words have been called *syncategorematica*, a term which rivals the famous name chrononountonthologos. Our syncategorematica signifies that a certain word, which is of small or of no unusual value in itself, is yet made of very great account in company with other words, when suitably marshalled among them. But I think, with submission, that these words should be called *pointers*, in allusion to the two stars in the Ursa Major which point to the north star; for in like manner these words point to the sense, and we mark them as pointers by a strong emphasis, as "God *so* loved the world," John iii. 16; for here, whether we consider the subject of the text (God's love), or the gift (his only Son), we are equally at a loss for an expression of admiration: one is "infinite;" the other, "unspeakable." The apostle St. John, therefore, feeling the inexpressible sublimity of his subject, would not attempt to unveil it; yet by one short word *so*, and giving that a place so well adapted to receive it, he conveys to the mind more than any circumlocution or amplification ever could have accomplished. It is in cases like these that the judicious preacher, while he does justice to his text, enlarges the conceptions of his,

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audience, and elevates himself in the estimation of the wise.

The meaning of even single words is not always convertible from one language to another, without some diminution of force or energy; but in some cases the translation may be more expressive than the original, as in Job iv. 9: "By the *blast* of God they perish." Here the Hebrew receives an accession of strength in our English word *blast*. The original means no more than to breathe out of the nostrils with anger, but in English it is the concentration of every terrible idea; it is the terror of terrors, directed by an unerring hand to execute vengeance divine in a moment on provoking rebels. Addison in Cato adopts this word with effect:

> "Is there not some chosen curse,
> Some hidden thunder in the store of heav'n,
> Red with uncommon wrath, to *blast* the man
> Who owes his greatness to his country's ruin?"

The above is not a solitary instance of the original being somewhat indebted to an English translation; endless duration is both in Hebrew and Greek but very imperfectly expressed: in short they have no single term to convey the idea of our English word *everlasting;* this meets the full exigency of the case, it conveys the solemn and sublime idea as far as language can carry it. The name of the Supreme Being, *Almighty*, expresses in an admirable manner the two words in Hebrew, אל שדי. As instances in which our translation of the New Testament favours a strong expression, we may refer to 1 Thes. v. 23: "The *very* God of peace," &c. John vii. 26: "Do the rulers *know indeed* that this is the *very* Christ." In general however these emphatic words, these pointers, are by far the strongest in the original, though not without strength when translated into the English language; for instance, 1 Chron. iv. 10: "Oh that thou wouldest bless me *indeed*." "It seems, besides what goes under the common notion of blessing, Jabez reckoned there was somewhat

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more peculiar, which he calls blessing indeed. There is a known Hebraism in this expression; what we read 'bless me indeed' is 'bless me in blessing me:' as if he had said, Let me have a blessing within a blessing; let me have that blessing whereof the other is but a cortex, the outside; let me have that blessing which is wrapped up and inclosed in the external blessing," something akin to "grace for grace."

So likewise, Acts v. 20: "All the words of *this life*." "By 'this life' is meant a peculiar sort of life; *this life*, *της ζωης ταυτης*. This *same life* that was so highly predicated and cried up at that time, so that no one could be in doubt what kind of life it was. It is true out of these circumstances, when we use the phrase 'of this life,' we ordinarily refer to the common affairs of this present life; but that it cannot be so understood here is evident: the whole business under consideration had quite another reference. The apostles had no controversy with the rulers of the Jews about the affairs of this world, or of the best way of living a few days on earth; but what was the surest way of living for ever: and whether believing in Christ as the Messiah, he that was to come, were not that way. Christ's complaint was that they would not come to him that they might have this life; so here the angel of the Lord commanded the apostles to preach the words of this life, using the demonstrative term *ταυτης*· this same life, now so much disputed, and which began to make so great a noise in the world; cried up by some, decried by others: this sufficiently distinguished it. There were some obscure notices of it before; but now it was more clearly revealed, and more loudly to be spoken out. The manner of expression signifies it to be a peculiar and more excellent kind of life, very distinct from and far transcending what is common to men, nor leaves us in any doubt of the angel's meaning. Now the 'words of this life' must necessarily mean the gospel, viz., of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which Christ's servants are bound to diffuse in the *words* of it.

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Hence it follows that we have things here in specialty; first, that the gospel is composed or made up of words of a peculiar, most excellent, and noble kind of life; and secondly, that such words are to be revered, preserved, preached pure and without alloy."—*J. Howe.*

We see by these instances how much is to be learnt by paying strict attention to the manner of an expression, and that to pass by this is to make slovenly work of preaching. The proper conduct as to these passages seems to be to state the beauty or force of the word or words, or their *peculiarity,* and then to comment upon them with truth and accuracy, as by the last two examples. Some criticisms may be dry and uninteresting, but such as these never can be so.

I will here remark that Scripture follows no settled manner in expression. Sometimes, instead of a concise usage, it adopts a modified manner, as in these Lectures, or as Gen. vi. 5: "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Still, in general, Scripture beauties consist in brevities, *multum in parvo,* like the diamond that by diminutive brilliancy attracts and secures to itself the honour of pre-eminence. It will be our present business to search for these valuables, and bring them to light, or rather bring again to light what others have discovered, and perhaps the best way will be to consider them by the part of speech to which they respectively belong.

The Greek articles are very superior to those of the English, as Matt. xxvi. 28. Our Lord, at the institution of the commemorative supper, took the cup, and, having given it to his disciples, said: "For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Almost every syllable of the Greek, but especially the articles, is singularly emphatic: Τουτο γαρ εστι ΤΟ αιμα μου, ΤΟ της καινης διαθηκης, ΤΟ περι πολλων εκχυνομενον εις αφεσιν αμαρτιων. The following literal translation and paraphrase are suitable to the original: "*For this is*

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THAT *blood of mine* which was pointed out by all the sacrifices under the Jewish law, and particularly by the shedding and sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb; THAT *blood* of the sacrifice slain for the ratification of the new covenant; THE *blood* ready to be poured out for the multitudes, the Gentiles as well as the Jews, for the taking away of sin; sin, whether original or actual, in all its power and guilt, in all its energy and pollution."—*T. H. Horne*, vol. ii.

Here we obtain a clear and distinct view of the sacrifice of Christ which we so often commemorate (though I think not often enough), which reflection, abstraction, or meditation but faintly represents. The law is the mirror, the medium of knowledge; this help must not be despised or neglected. You, as preachers, must study the law; you must be lawyers, or you cannot be gospellers in the complete sense intended.

Now observe, in the above translation, the three words in capitals are the pointers without which we cannot well discern the sense. This is a very choice excellence of the Greek language, which without very great care we almost lose.

Another instance we have in St. Peter's famous confession, Matt. xvi. 16: Συ ει ὁ Χριστος ὁ υἱος ΤΟΥ Θεου ΤΟΥ ζωντος· "Thou art *the* Christ, *the* Son of *the* living God." In this passage, as in the last instance, every word is highly emphatic, agreeably to a rule in the Greek language. The apostle Peter did not say merely, thou art Christ, Son of God, without the article, but thou art the Christ, the Messiah, *the* Son, that very Son, thus positively asserting his belief of that fundamental article of the Christian religion, the divinity and office of the Redeemer of the world. Again: to follow the passage through every beauty—"Of *the living* God, or of God *the* living one." But there is something as to emphasis to be observed in our Lord's reply to Peter: Συ ει Πετρος· "I say unto thee, Thou *art*

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Peter," importing that the name was more a title than a proper name. This was more particularly the case in former times; for when a person's name was changed, the new name was always significant; and for the most part, when given by divine authority, predictive of some peculiarity in the character, the life, the achievements, or the destiny, of the person on whom it was imposed. When Simon the son of Jona first became a follower of Christ, our Lord gave him the name of Cephas or the *rock*, which passed into the equivalent word in the Greek, Πετρος. Our Lord, upon this occasion of the confession of his faith, says to him, "Thou *art Peter*." The like form of words—though the similarity appears not in our English Bibles—but the like form of words was used by the patriarch Jacob, as the exordium of the blessing which he pronounced upon the most distinguished of his sons: "Thou *art Judah;* thy brethren shall praise thee:" that is, Thou hast been rightly named Judah, the name properly belongs to thee, because thou wilt be what the name imports, the object of thy brethren's praise. So here: "Thou art Peter;" that is, Thou hast been properly named so; for it now appears that thou hast about thee what the name imports.

But to proceed a little farther in these edifying criticisms, turn to John i. 21, Ὁ προφητης ει συ? Thou art *that* prophet whom the Jewish nation have so long and so anxiously expected, and who had been promised by Moses (Deut. xviii. 15—18). Revert also to John x. 11: Εγω ειμι ὁ ποιμην ὁ καλος· I am *that* good shepherd, or *the* shepherd *that* good one, of whom Isaiah (xl. 11) and Ezekiel (xxxiv. 23) respectively prophesied.—*Horne.*

See John i. 14: "The Word was made flesh, and *dwelt* among us, εσκηνωσεν εν ἡμιν· literally, *tabernacled* among us. The word σκηνοω signifies to erect a booth, tabernacle, or temporary residence, and not a permanent dwelling; it was therefore fitly applied to the humanity of Christ, which, like the ancient tabernacle, was to be only a temporary residence of

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the Eternal Divinity on earth. There is also a strong emphasis in our Lord's sentence or judgment, Matt. xxii. 21: "Render unto God the things that are God's;" the Greek article is twice repeated, Τα του Θεου. There is a still more remarkable emphasis in Heb. xiii. 5: Ου μη σε ανω ουδ' ου μη σε εγκαταλιπω, which Dr. Guise says is equal to "I will not leave thee, no, no, I will not forsake thee."

Verbs in the imperative mode are very expressive, as "*Come* now, let us reason together." "*Come* unto me all ye that labour," &c.; and which you can sufficiently observe in Cruden's Concordance on the word *come*.

Sometimes adverbs carry great emphasis as to some notion of time. "*Then* they that feared the Lord spake often one to another" (Mal. iii. 16). The word *then* is here peculiarly emphatic, for it was a time of great degeneracy. At this season of open wickedness there were a few truly pious Jews, "who spake often one to another." We may also notice this passage, Rom. viii. 1: "There is *now* therefore no condemnation."

The pronoun is often very emphatic, as Phil. i. 29: "For to *you* it is given on behalf of Christ," &c.; and 2 Sam. xii. 7: *Thou* art the man."

The above examples will, I think, be sufficient to show that the manner of an expression, &c., deserves your regard. This science is worthy the name that is given to it, *philology*—the love of words; and cannot fail to assist the diligent student to bring out of the divine treasury things new and old. I have already said that it is not very difficult; it requires nothing but an accurate inspection of words and their design. Now when you comprehend these things, either by your own industry or by the helps you receive, will you not be better qualified to discuss a text than you were before? I know it is not your duty to be always pondering upon words; generally speaking you must fix upon the subject of your text, its general character and design, and must discuss ably and comprehen-

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sively; but whenever there is an evident emphasis upon any word, however small the word may be, it ought not to be overlooked or neglected.

Allow me to recommend that, when you read the Scriptures for your private edification, you mark these extraordinary words by drawing a line under them with a pen, and I feel persuaded that your edification will reward your sedulous attention; while on the other hand a hurrying perusal is like travelling post, a number of beauties scattered by the way must be passed unnoticed.

Having thus recommended the Topic to your attention, I may be permitted to add that, in endeavouring to give their full effect, their full strength and fair proportions, to the peculiarities on which we are treating, we must be careful not to dwell so long upon single words as to become trifling or tedious, as that would defeat the very design and intention altogether. Some hints to this end we shall gather from the perusal of the sermons of Walker, Davies, Simeon, &c. They thought this an important point, and they have left us the benefit of their plans.

No. 1. Mr. Simeon (vol. i., p. 447). His text is Deut. xxvii. 26: "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law," &c., and he notices the great emphasis of the word *Amen*, which we are so frequently taking into our lips.

I. This allows an assent to its truth.

II. A confession of its reasonableness.

III. An acknowledgment of its excellency.

IV. An approbation of it with regard to our own particular case.

No. 2. Mr. Davies (vol. i., p. 188), on Isa. lxvi. 2: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor," &c. In this passage the emphasis lies upon the pronoun *this*; distinguishing the objects of divine regard, and rejecting the self-righteous character that claims a look from heaven. Our author preserves the emphasis by making his divisions

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and discussion to turn on the descriptions given in the text of the man to whom the Majesty of Heaven condescends to look with favour.

I. It is the *poor man* whom he thus regards.

II. His *contrition* is noticed.

III. He is one who trembles at God's word.

By referring to a former Lecture you will see the emphasis and divisions run upon the word *show* : " Who will *show* us any good ?" Ps. iv. 6.

No. 3. Mr. Walker, on Hos. xiv. 8 : " Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols ?" takes notice of the emphatic word *shall*. He observes,

There is something very remarkable in this expression. Ephraim had joined himself to idols ; God once seemed to let him alone ; but now divine compassion decides otherwise : " Ephraim *shall* say," &c. These words suggest the following observations :

I. That a sinner in his natural state is joined to idols.

II. That to separate a sinner from his idols is the work of God alone.

III. That this separation is effected by discoveries of grace.

IV. That every person thus separated will readily speak out the words of the text, and cry, in response to the Lord's *shall*, I *will* renounce idols.

No. 4. Walker, on Gal. vi. 4 : " Let every one prove his own work." The emphatic word *own* is here duly insisted on. Our author remarks,

We are all ready enough to examine the works of others, and to pass sentence upon them. We are often abroad, but seldom at home ; like some travellers who are well acquainted with other countries, but shamefully ignorant of their own.

I. Explain the import of the exhortation.

II. Give some directions with regard to the manner of conducting the inquiry.

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The foregoing examples turn chiefly on single words; but the Topic will also lead us to notice phrases or sentences in which the style or manner of expression may be in any respect remarkable. The following is an example in which the Topic is thus employed as the basis of division:

No. 5. Walker, on James iv. 13—15: "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city," &c. He considers,

I. The form of expression condemned.

II. The amendment suggested.

These examples will, I imagine, be sufficient to direct any student. Emphatic words are in some cases to affect the division of a discourse, while in others a transient notice will be sufficient. A sound judgment is of continual utility; and this, like every other faculty, will be strengthened and improved by exercise and experience.

Having in the former section concluded my remarks on this Topic, so far as regards the assistance which it is calculated to furnish in sermonizing, I shall now proceed to recommend an attention to manner in reference to the delivery of your discourses, and to offer a few hints for the assistance of those who may not have an opportunity to consult more elaborate treatises on this subject. Such in my view is the importance attaching to the manner in which any thing is done that it may be called a distinct study, and one that is well worthy the student's attention. When we consider what a commanding influence the mere manner of a thing obtains among men, how much the best actions may suffer from the manner in which they are performed, and how often the manner will carry a point with very slender means, must we not admit that it ought to receive our best attention in every thing we execute, in every thing we say, and in every thing in which our fellow-men are to be our observers and critics? The manner in which

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an army is arranged and a battle fought is commonly of great consequence, and often contributes more to the victory than valour or numerical strength. Often has the manner of an orator been found so to strike the eye and the ear that thunders of applause have followed a well-delivered sentence, a just emphasis, or graceful cadence, though the sentence itself would have passed unnoticed but for such an appendage. We have several popular preachers who owe almost every thing to their manner; and many others who ought to be popular, and certainly would be so, if an attention to manner occupied one-tenth of the time and pains employed on their compositions. "When we address ourselves to others by words," observes Dr. Blair, "our intention certainly is to make some impression on those to whom we speak; it is to convey to them our own ideas and emotions. Now the tone of our voice, our looks and gestures, interpret our ideas and emotions no less than words do; nay, the impression they make on others is frequently much stronger than any that words can make. We often see that an expressive look, or a passionate cry, unaccompanied by words, conveys to others more forcible ideas, and rouses within them stronger passions, than can be communicated by the most eloquent discourse: the signification of our sentiments made by tones and gestures has this advantage above that made by words, that it is the language of nature. It is that method of interpreting our mind which nature has dictated to all, and which is understood by all: whereas words are arbitrary conventional symbols of our ideas, and by consequence must make a more feeble impression. So true is this that, to render words fully significant, they must in almost every case receive some aid from the manner of pronunciation and delivery; and he who, in speaking, should employ bare words, without enforcing them by proper tones and accents, would leave us with a faint and indistinct impression, often with a doubtful and ambiguous conception, of

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what he had delivered. Nay, so close is the connexion between certain sentiments and the proper manner of pronouncing them, that he who does not pronounce them after that manner can never persuade us that he believes or feels the sentiments themselves."*

"Pleads he in earnest? Look upon his face;
His eyes do drop no tears, his prayers are jest:
His words come from his mouth; ours from our breast:
He prays but faintly, and would be denied;
We pray with heart and soul."

The following is a translation (the first, I believe, in print) of Borromeo's directions on this subject, which are well worthy of the student's attention:

"Let him not aim at a laboured kind of eloquence. Let him avoid all dissimulation. Let him not, in the act of speaking, follow the manner of the ignorant multitude; and let him avoid obsolete and foreign words. He will by all means avoid such terms as those of fate, fortune, mischance, and others of that kind. Let him not affect a too frequent use of epithets, nor a poetical kind of speaking. Let him not make use of the proverbs of old women; and let him avoid a repetition of the same matter. When he speaks of faults which offend against chastity, let him use caution, lest he imprudently fall into obscene discourse. Let him take care that in speaking he do not throw out scandalous insinuations. Let him by all means avoid flattery, and beware of an ostentatious manner of speaking. Let him not speak ambiguously, nor too concisely or obscurely, that his hearers may not be in doubt. A preacher will endeavour to moderate his voice and action so as to seem to speak, not according to art, but sincerely, and according to nature. Let him not strike the pulpit with his hands except when the importance of the subject requires it. He will not fly, as it were, across the pulpit, leaping first from this corner, and then from that. Let him stand upright in the pulpit. Let him not wrinkle his

* Blair, Lect. xxxviii.



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nose, lick his lips, fix his chin on his chest, nor throw out his arms like a gladiator. Let him neither cough nor spit frequently, unless necessity compels him. Nor let him, whilst speaking, discharge the greater part of his breath through his nose."

To this plain but judicious counsel I beg leave here to add the following hints, as preliminary to the direct study of manner:

1. Study to discover and correct your very worst fault before you attempt any thing else; then endeavour to correct the next worst, and so on till your whole manner is changed. If any difficulty occur in this discovery, make use of your friends and even your enemies; at any rate make the discovery.

> "If you in true intent your faults would know,
> Make use of every friend and every foe."

This advice I apply particularly to any natural fault or acquired bad habit in speaking.

2. Get a correct notion of what is neat and graceful. To this end study nature; see how nature expresses herself where passions or feelings are unrestrained. Also as far as you have opportunity take the benefit of the best living examples—the best public preachers, the best pleaders, the most eloquent of our senators: whatever is excellent in these has its foundation in nature.

3. Before manner can be of any use the matter of your discourse must be well collected and arranged, and expressed in correct language, or there would be nothing worthy of a graceful manner. A discourse well arranged and elegantly worded may be thought to require no aid from manner; but this is certainly a mistake, since the more excellent the matter and arrangement of a discourse, the more capable it is of receiving every embellishment that a graceful manner can add to it: and in this view there is no occasion to institute the inquiry, "Whether matter or manner conduce most to the success of a sermon?"

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I am perfectly aware that the remarks offered in this Lecture are but little wanted by many of my readers. Some have a countenance so naturally expressive, or possess such strong religious feelings, that they cannot speak otherwise than impressively; many also have acquired such a just manner of pronunciation from good tutors as to require no assistance from these pages; some have a naturally graceful manner; some, so fine an ear to propriety, and a perception so correct, that in practice they are little behind the well educated; while others are furnished with works which treat fully on the subjects which can here be but briefly touched upon. All these classes are quite out of my present view, my design being to furnish some assistance to the least educated and to those who have the fewest advantages.

One of the first objects of attention, in reference to manner, is the proper management of the voice. It is plain that we should so speak as that we may be well heard. The ancient wizards muttered as though they distrusted their own words: Isa. viii. 19. It is equally plain that we should speak agreeably, so as to move the audience we address. By the first we raise or convey ideas, and by the second we excite emotions. The quantity of voice must be sufficient for the whole space occupied; and, when a voice is naturally weak, it may be brought to a sufficient strength by degrees, as I perfectly know by experience.

But, besides mere volume of voice, the sound, in whatever degree it is made, will receive very great advantage from a distinct manner of speaking. "Distinctness of articulation contributes more, perhaps, to being well heard and clearly understood, than mere loudness of sound. The quantity of sound necessary to fill even a large space is smaller than is commonly imagined; and, with a distinct articulation, a man of a weak voice will make it reach farther than the strongest voice can reach without it. To this, therefore, every public speaker ought to pay great atten-



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tion. He must give every sound which he utters its due proportion, and let every syllable, and even every letter in the word which he pronounces, be heard distinctly, without slurring, whispering, or suppressing any of the proper sounds."* I add, speak neither too slowly nor too rapidly.

Manner has also some respect to *accentuation*, and on this I must be excused if I lead you back to your former studies. "Accent," says Murray, "is the laying of a peculiar stress of the voice on a certain letter or syllable in a word, that it may be better heard than the rest, or distinguished from them; as in the word *presume*, the stress of the voice must be under the letter *u*, and hence the second syllable takes the accent." Entick's or Johnson's accentuated dictionaries give the whole scheme, but Walker's Pronouncing Dictionary is the best.

Next to this whole sentences require attention, and every sentence has one or more emphatic word or words in it. Emphasis (from εμφαινω, to express strongly) either establishes the true sense of a sentence, or ruins and perverts it: take for an example the words of our Saviour, John vi. 67: "Will ye also go away?" Here the emphasis is certainly required upon the word *ye*. The crowd is gone, the crowd is offended, and will *ye* go after them. The reply of Peter, in the name of his fellow-disciples, proves this point. Now although I have fixed upon the emphasis, yet there is very strong meaning in the sentence on whichever word the emphasis is placed. Upon the word *ye* it is very strong: *ye*, my disciples, whom I have taken under my wing, whom I have taught and instructed; consider the profession you have made, the obligations you lie under, the expectations you have from me. If we place the emphasis on *also*, then it refers to those who have departed; if on the words *go away*, fresh matter immediately appears: Will you leave your Master? are you willing to relin-

* Blair, Lect. xxxiii.

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quish all claim to my care, love, tenderness, protection, and salvation? What wrong have you found in me? have I ever disappointed your just and reasonable hopes? have I ever been a barren wilderness to you? Can you find a better master? will your adversary the devil, the world, or sin, promise and perform what I make over to you in the New Testament? what can earth, what can heaven itself do for you? If you draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in you, and can you bear my departure from you?

There is also, as you recollect, in most grammars, this example of emphasis: "Do you ride to town to-day?" Now if you read these words without the least emphasis, the question will be very equivocal. If you place the emphasis on the second word *you*, the answer might be: No, I shall send my man. If you place it on the next word *ride*, then the answer might be: No, I shall walk. If you place it upon the succeeding word *town*, then the answer might be: No, I shall take my ride in the country. If, lastly, you place it on *to-day*, then the answer might be: No, I shall defer my ride till to-morrow.

Blair points out the great shades of difference in the point and meaning that may attach to the appeal which Christ made to Judas, according as the emphasis is placed: "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss? Marking the word *betrayest* makes the reproach turn on the infamy of treachery. Betrayest *thou?* makes it rest upon Judas's connexion with his Master. Betrayest thou the *Son of Man?* rests it on Christ's character as the Redeemer. Rest the mark on the word *kiss*, and it turns upon prostituting the signal of peace to the purpose of destruction. Now I submit that the emphasis ought to lie on *thou*, which marks Judas's connexion with his Master, because it agrees with the prophetic language of the Psalms, Ps. xli. 9: "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me:" and it is particularly noticed in the

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gospel that he was "one of the twelve." Besides, that any other than one of Christ's friends should be treacherous and deceitful, were no marvel at all.

Again: take this passage, Acts xvii. 28: "We are also his offspring." If the emphasis be placed upon the word *we*, it points out who were the persons so called the offspring of God: if placed on the word *are*, it positively asserts the truth of the expression: if it be placed on *also*, it implies that we are not the only persons that are God's offspring, but we express our claim as well as others: if it be placed on *his*, it points us to our Creator: and if on the word *offspring*, we are led from plain to figurative language, and by a beautiful trope derived from a tree, to consider our relation to and dependance upon God for every blessing, as the branches depend upon the root. In some cases the emphasis is plain, as in interrogatives: Who said so? Why weepest thou? Here it is evidently on the first word: all interrogatives, however, do not throw the emphasis on the first, for it is sometimes reserved for the last word; the sense must direct.

When words are put in opposition the emphatic words are obvious; as, It is better to be *loved* than *feared*. Nobody can err as to "Thou art the man!" but in other cases it is confessed there is difficulty. The speaker must consider the scope and design, because here he has to learn the mind of another; but there is no difficulty when he utters any thing fresh from his own heart, and this is one thing that makes natural eloquence so attractive. Many of the ministers of the establishment excel in public reading, because they are unusually accurate in emphasizing: and they make this a study; some young clergymen have their Common Prayer-book with all the emphatic words underlined by a skilful hand. If our preachers were to resort to the hearing of some of our best church ministers, I am persuaded it would not be in vain.

There is, however, one remark I may make: it is better

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to emphasize too little than too much. Extravagance is wrong, and quite contrary to a just manner.

Notice must also be taken of the *rest* or *pause;* that is, we are sometimes to suspend discourse. Race-horses must not stop till they pass the post, but not so the preacher or reader; he is allowed to take breath freely at suitable places of his discourse. One such place in preaching is at the close of a division or subdivision. Here the people are relieved, and have a profitable moment of reflection: yet, for evident reasons, these pauses must not be too long.

But besides the pauses at the close of a division or paragraph, there is the rest of eloquence—the rest that speaks when the preacher suspends his voice, while the countenance still maintains the subject or the living thought. Some pauses in reading are necessary even to convey the sense; as, for instance, Matt. xi .7: "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?" If these words be read as question and answer (which according to the preceding context is evidently opposite to our Lord's meaning), it is as much as though our Redeemer meant to say that John was unworthy of attention; that he was a fickle, unstable, inconsistent preacher, carried about with every wind of doctrine. Whereas, if we consider the passage as two questions (as it really is), the sense clearly appears to be a strong assertion to the contrary; that John was a person of quite a different character, and that he stood firm and immovable as an "iron pillar" or a brazen wall; that the doctrines he preached were not yea and nay, but yea and amen.* Therefore, to mark the above passage properly, a pause must be used after the first question to give silent eloquence to the passage, and the same after the second question; then our Lord's meaning appears to advantage. May I here interpose a caution that is rather irrelevant, but

* I am indebted to Eades' View of the Gospel Ministry for part of these ideas.

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which now occurs to me. Take care to ascertain at what place to pause or leave off your discourse, as the people are often prepared for it before it comes.

Thus I have made a few remarks on accentuation, on emphasis, on the rest or pause, each of which is important, and deserves your attention in its place; but there is likewise a general skill necessary over all the words of a sentence, which we may call the mode or manner. The fault which it is intended now to correct is called monotony, from μονος, single, and τονος, a tone: uniformity of sound, want of variety in cadence. The excellence we would therefore notice, and which we now recommend, is to give tone in variety. To give an illustration: Suppose one person were to repeat the progression of numbers from one to eight, and to say, in one manner and tone, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight. This he does without any change of higher and lower in note, not even so much as the ticks of a clock. Suppose that a second person repeats all these words, but does it in the sound of eight bells. Now here is a striking difference; something like it exists between a monotonous speaker and another who adds little variety to his speaking: not that he is to sing, but he is to give it the due grace of variety. I said before, study nature; nature loves variety. As the eye and the taste delight not in sameness, neither does the ear. Perpetually harping upon the same string is wearisome, but a diversified melody is pleasing; and, if this melody harmonize with good sense, it edifies also. Yet, I repeat, to make a singing in reading or speaking is no where to be tolerated but in cathedral service, and even there the beauty of our liturgy is lost by it. Some words are to be delivered in a higher and some in a lower tone, and others in a kind of barytone or midway elevation; and in such a manner as that the rising and falling is regular, not by sudden jerks from one octave to another, as in music. The bold undulation of the sea waves in somewhat of a gale, is no unfit

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comparison ; or walking along a path, straight as to direction, but varied by rises and falls, conveys the same idea. This is not a wild but an intelligible variety or modulation, and is only to be acquired by studying nature, by taking the best rules and the best examples.

In this regulation of the voice you have tone, inflexion, and cadence. Tone, you know, means note or sound ; and here I meanf urther pretty much the same thing with what is called in music the pitch or key-note. It is not positively any one certain note for all persons ; but the tone or key is that to every one which is natural to him, as proceeding from the higher, the barytone, or the lower ; and which is to be ascertained by a person's conversation pitch : this is the standard from which elevation or cadence is to be reckoned. This is generally the true judgment ; but when any individual has by nature or habit too much of an alto or feminine, or a low bass, both of which are disagreeable to an audience, and both of which, especially the latter, are found by experience incapable of inflexion, and consequently monotonous ; then I earnestly recommend an attempt to be made to overrule the prevailing key or tone, and to fix it in a more favourable station ; but let the student begin this practice in his ordinary conversation, where every thing that relates to the art of speaking should commence.

The word *inflexion* is equivalent to modulation: it is the power itself to move higher or lower, as the undulating of the waves before mentioned ; or inflexion has the command of elevation and cadence, and is the perfect contrary of the monotonous character, which is incapable of this power. By inflexion you pass from your key-note or natural tone higher or lower *pro re nata*.

The cadence is the fall of the voice below the pitch, commonly when the speaker arrives at the full period, but sometimes at the colon also. The cadence requires fine management, and every possible preparation is to be made for it that a refined taste can suggest. The noticeable pre-



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paration is at the last comma preceding the full stop, and the preparation itself is an elevation of the voice on the word just before the comma, as in the following quotation: "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

In this sentence it may be also observed that, the form of the words being imperative, the words *boast not* require an elevation of the voice above the usual key-note; but in ordinary cases the reading of a sentence commences at the key or pitch, and in general the first variation is where the sense begins to unfold itself, and not earlier; the words that occur previous to this should be in the key or pitch, without variation, that is, unless previous sentences, being somewhat impassioned, forbid that regularity; as Acts xxvi: "Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself." Here the first five words are introductory; they are to be uttered in the tone or key of the voice, and, being introductory, no change whatever is advisable. After these five words, the sense opens: "Thou art permitted to speak for thyself." Here the elevation takes the word permitted, and is the preparation for the ensuing cadence, "to speak for thyself."

It is the perfect command of these particulars, and their just regulation, that can give strength and beauty to the sense intended to be conveyed to the mind for its edification and delight. This is one part of eloquence; the copious flow of thought and language is the other. I hope, if any share of these excellences be possessed, that pride will be excluded; if we speak well, it must be as though unconscious of it, like the nightingale that knows no feelings of exultation, however sweet her notes may be. You will very properly reflect that, even when you have attained considerable ability in graceful delivery, still your acquirements are far below those of others in the same line of excellence, and that to discover any thing like self-complacency would only manifest your want of common sense.

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Little minds are pleased with little things; but minds imbedded in wisdom are otherwise occupied. They think little of the thing itself, but chiefly on the end to be promoted by it—the glory of God and men's good.

The observations contained in the preceding section apply chiefly to temperate speaking—to sober, rational, argumentative address—and to reading in public; but much more is necessary for animated address, the accompaniment of feeling, or affection, or passion, which will draw with it some degree of action. And here too nature must be followed; not however nature in her vulgar forms, but nature corrected by good taste and sound sense. An ancient story has reached our times of a dumb youth, who, on a certain sudden occasion, when an assassin had lifted up his arm with a sword to slay his father, had his feelings so much excited that, with extended arms and a most bitter cry, he for the first time spoke, "Oh, save my father!" Now imagine with yourselves how the youth spoke these words, and then our meaning is exemplified as to *feelings*. The principles of divine grace, which impart an energy and a value to human language infinitely above what it would otherwise possess, neither abrogate nor forbid the operation of our feelings,* but on the contrary improve and regulate them; and if feelings, affections, or passions have any existence in our hearts, they will naturally find the way to our lips, will pervade our countenance; our head, our arms, will catch the fire; and emotions as well as ideas will thus be communicated to our hearers. It seems then a necessary inference, that if the thing felt be a matter of pure nature, then it is not a matter of art; and the existence of that which constitutes the fact of powerful feeling is necessary before art can be summoned to our aid. The following

* This section is closely connected with the future treatise on comment, and must be read with it.

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has been ascribed to the celebrated Mr. Garrick, as conveying his sentiments on the subject. A minister, it appears, had requested to know Mr. Garrick's sentiments on public speaking; and his reply was nearly as follows:

"My dear pupil,

"You know how you would feel and speak in the parlour to a dear friend who was in imminent danger of his life, and with what energetic pathos of diction and countenance you would enforce the observance of that which you really thought would be for his preservation. You would not think of playing the orator, of studying your emphasis, cadence, or gesture. You would be yourself; and the interesting nature of your subject, impressing your heart, would furnish you with the most natural tone of voice, the most proper language, the most engaging features, and the most suitable and graceful gestures. What you would be in the parlour, be in the pulpit; and you will not fail to please, to affect, to profit.

"Adieu ——."

Those feelings which are excited by evangelical considerations, and by the value and importance of our immortal spirits, will give effect to Christian eloquence, not to the extinction of cultivated skill, but rather in concurrence with it. "Paul must plant (skilfully), and Apollos must water (judiciously), and God (by special unction) gives the increase." But let it be remembered that our time will be far more appropriately and necessarily employed in humble prayer for divine influence, than in attempts to imitate those whose feelings are under its control, and assuming what we really do not feel. He who is the giver of every good and perfect gift, who loves to be sought, and to whom the cause of the gospel is precious, will not fail to answer prayer in this respect. But it is not to our present purpose to treat of divine influences; the above hints are only thrown in by way of caution. He is a presump-

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tuous preacher who, confiding in the assistance of art, ventures to proceed in his work without ardently imploring divine helps; and he is a vain preacher who despises the cultivation of those natural gifts and talents which God has given him for edification. I may therefore be allowed to name some of the chief feelings, affections, or passions, which the philosophy of the mind brings before us, and to show, in a few instances, what are the external tokens of those feelings where they prevail, and what degree of reliance can be placed upon them.

I begin with *admiration* or *wonder*. This feeling is excited by objects that are grand or sublime. Admiration expresses itself by both hands being moderately elevated, and the eyes elevated in the same manner and fixed upward, and gives the character of astonishment. It is unknown to stupid, inanimate beings, but a preacher makes strange work of it that can stumble upon what is admirable without feeling it. Who could utter such words as these with apathy: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; Lord, what is man!" &c. The works of the divine architect exhibit infinities of sparkling excellences which mock our inquiries, but which excite our admiration. Again: Solomon says, with great pathos, "But will God indeed dwell with man upon the earth? Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee!" What solemn suitability do such passages afford to our devotions in connexion with due thoughts of our insignificancy and pollution! In preaching the word, who can speak without admiration of the plan of redemption? the divine love, the love of Christ which passeth knowledge? Who can behold Jesus controlling nature, applying remedies for all diseases, raising the dead, conferring powers and faculties on man which never before had any existence in him—who can speak of that life and immortality which Christ has brought

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to light, without in some degree manifesting a grateful admiration? Surely it is impossible.

Again: true religion is established upon *love*, love to God and love to man; a preacher, therefore, who is not strongly susceptible of this feeling, or who is deficient in his manner of expressing it, cannot be eloquent, however well informed may be his understanding. But the truly evangelical mind feels now, as well as holy men of old, the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost; the love of Christ operates as a constraining power, bearing every thing before it, and bringing the principles and feelings of the mind into subjection; the love of the Spirit exists as an indwelling principle in his heart; and the love of all persons and things, wherever the grace of God predominates, is brought into due subordination to those primeval feelings. This love is followed by extraordinary effects in preaching the word, and really connects itself mysteriously with all gracious principles, and becomes the prevailing character of the soul; it absorbs every thing else, and is what St. Paul calls the perfectness of the Christian character; 1 Cor. xiii. Nothing can compensate for it, as St. Paul declares; and, to the work of the ministry, it is "like the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers of yellow gold;" Ps. lxviii. 13. The example of Paul, in his whole ministry, serves instead of all others, save and except that of Christ himself, as to its mighty power in the work of the ministry. Well might the apostle express it as the great desire of his soul on behalf of the Thessalonians, that "the Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God."

You can expect to succeed in moving the affections of your hearers only in proportion as you manifest the spirit of love; and while I cannot advise you to reject any assistance that art may furnish, I am fully persuaded that something beyond the reach of art must be possessed, if we

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would lead our hearers to imbibe this powerful principle. To drink deeply into the Spirit of Christ will give an energy and a pathos to your whole manner, which will add a persuasive unction to all you say.

We must likewise advert to *hatred* or *abhorrence*. As one object is lovely to nature, so another may be repulsive and disgusting. Hatred is virtue or vice, a gracious feeling or a devilish one, according to the subject or person who exercises it, or the objects by which it is excited. The hatred of the evil spirit is the contrast of divine love, but Christian hatred has a real existence, and is turned as by an instinctive feeling against every thing that God hates. I mean this is the case when divine love predominates in the heart. "Do not I hate them that hate thee?" (their sins, not their persons;) "I hate them with perfect hatred;" Ps. cxxxix. 21, 22. From the same principle the believer hates himself and the sins that made the Saviour bleed. The ugliness and deformity of sin appear so detestable that the believer "hates even the garments spotted with the flesh," as blood-stained and horrible.

Holy *anger* we shall not consider separately, but as a modification of the above: "Jesus looked on his enemies with anger, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts." It must, however, be acknowledged that we are by no means moved as we ought to be when sin or holiness presents itself, or when we are called upon to express our sentiments respecting them. The reason is, there is so much of the "flesh" in us, with all its natural bias and affection to evil, and so little of the spiritual nature, that we obtain but a glimpse of the real turpitude of sin and of the excellence of holiness; but if we were more perfect, the sinner, though in an angelic form, or with all the bewitcheries that nature sometimes attains, or sin in any of its abstract or most alluring forms, would appear black as hell; and holiness, though clothed with rags, though sunk in misery, though

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destitute of every thing attractive to a natural being, would instantly become the object of love and veneration. Hence we see the importance of a truly spiritual mind. The moment that we shall quit these bodies, among our first sensations in the invisible world will be astonishment at our former errors as to the real characters of sin and holiness.

*Aversion* is another modification of hatred. It is this which Solomon means, Prov. iv. 14, 15: "Enter not into the path of the wicked; avoid it, turn from it, and pass away." To the same purpose, Eph. v. 11: "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." This is a holy delicacy, that is disgusted at that which offends God. Now if a preacher is incapable of realizing this feeling, so as to express it in an appropriate manner, he can point no shaft at sin with effect: no smarting comment will be delivered; no lash to make the sinner feel; no expressive countenance to indicate the mind abhorrent of evil; but when the preacher feels as a Christian minister ought to feel, his countenance and manner is expected to correspond with every word that is uttered.

Holy *zeal* has perhaps as good a claim to be called a passion as any thing that bears that name. The Christian preacher makes but a melancholy figure without it. This passion, or sensation, or quality, call it what you please, throws the whole countenance open; the eye seems to coruscate, full of ardour and impatience: in short, imagine the apostle Paul, with the family of Philip the evangelist, when the terrors of the Jewish inquisition were arrayed to restrain Paul's progress: "What mean ye to weep and to break my heart? for I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus;" Acts xxi. 13. In the general tenour of his ministry, the love of Christ and zeal for his name constrained him to do,

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to bear, and to suffer all things for his sake and that of the church. In its more habitual or temperate forms it is a fervid and holy unction, which, overspreading every faculty of the preacher, directs every thing that he speaks, and finds a kindred feeling in the Christian heart.

When I reflect upon the concentrated power of all the holy passions that invest the true minister of Jesus Christ, I say, surely here is the finger of God; endowments hallowed to the highest ends, energies exerted with an angel-force to bring sinners to repentance. In that devoted breast we see ready for action pity for the wretched, sorrow for human woe, and compassion and benevolence for all mankind. For personal elevation of mind, faith in the promises, confidence in the cause, and the hope of a final triumph. But the wretched preacher that feels not these passions moves our commiseration, and we should as much dread falling into such an apathetic state as we should dread the palsy.*

The animation of the preacher's mind will not only give character to his countenance, but will also direct his arms and hands; and that which nature dictates, that which proceeds from holy feelings, ought to be indulged, not like the formal saws of the barn-player, but the graceful action of a Christian minister. The feeling of the mind must direct these motions of arm and hand: if the feeling be correct and strong, the action will not err materially; a graceful motion of the hands from the left to the right, with occasional elevations and extensions, such as good sense directs or a good living example recommends, should be duly cultivated.

But these preaching accomplishments, if acquired at all, must be first practised *out of the pulpit;* they must be practised in common conversation. The student should

* Dr. Watts on the Passions, which will supply the defects of this Lecture, may be had in 18mo. very cheap.

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venture to be a little talkative in company, in order to this practice. Every thing that belongs to elocution must begin at home, not in the pulpit; there it is to appear only as a settled habit and a second nature.

The following description of the manner in which the feelings of the mind are expressed is quoted from an essay of nearly seventy years' standing, and may be acceptable to some of my readers:

*Tranquillity* appears by the composure of the countenance and of all parts of the body. *Joy* and *delight*, in proportion to their degree, open the countenance and elevate the voice. *Love* brightens the countenance into a smile, and turns the eyes as towards the object; the tone of the voice is tender and persuasive. *Gratitude* gently elevates the voice and the eyes, and lays the right hand upon the heart. *Admiration* joins with these an air of astonishment and respect. *Veneration* is more grave and serious, with less surprise. *Shame* changes the countenance and declines the head; the speaker falters in his utterance, or is silent. *Remorse*, or a painful sense of guilt, is further expressed by the right hand striking the breast, the eyes weeping, the body trembling; and in *true penitence* the eyes are sometimes raised with humble hope. *Fear* opens wide the eyes and mouth, gives to the countenance an air of wildness, covers it with paleness, projects the hands, draws back the trembling body; the voice is weak; the sentences short, confused, incoherent. *Pity*, which is a mixture of love and grief, looks down upon distress with lifted hands and tender eyes; the accent is plaintive, often accompanied with tears. *Grief*, if sudden and violent, expresses itself by beating the breast, weeping, and other attitudes approaching to distraction. *Courage* opens the countenance, gives the whole form an erect and graceful air; the voice is firm, even, and articulate. *Anger* expresses itself with rapidity, harshness, noise, and a threatening attitude.

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*Aversion* or *hatred* draws back the body, turns the face on one side, as from the object, and throws out the hands on the opposite side. *Commendation* is expressed by an open, pleasant, and respectful countenance, a mild tone of voice, and the arms gently extended as towards the person we approve. *Reproof* puts on a stern countenance and a solemn voice, sometimes with a mixture of tenderness and affection. *Invitation* has a moderate degree of the expression of love and respect, with the hand beckoning the person toward us. *Soliciting* or *requesting* adds humility and reverence. *Dismissing* with approbation is done with a kind aspect and tone of voice, the right hand open, and gently waved towards the person.—*Essay on Public Speaking.* Longman. 1761.

Thus you see that a graceful manner, as it respects delivery, comprises a due attention to accent, emphasis, and rests or pauses; the general government of tone, modulation, and cadence; and, lastly, the appropriate expression of the affections or passions.* Surely the preacher that can manage all these well, may not be despised as a novice in the pulpit.

To secure this end permit me to subjoin the following observations:—

The manner laid down has a general command upon the whole of your public duty. It is not necessary here to inquire whether the expectation of the religious public, with regard to this subject, be reasonable or not, you will fulfil it in the best way you can.

In adopting from the foregoing hints any method of expressing the sentiments of your mind by action or gesture, you must, of course, be regulated according to times and circumstances. These things are not to be strained alike

* Our natural passions must be sanctified to God's service, or we never can be sanctified in our whole spirit, and soul, and body; 1 Thess. v. 23.

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on every service, but in some more, in others less. Language and manner are, on all occasions, to be suitable to each other. It is not fit that every topic should receive the highest embellishment. On every occasion there is always one manner more suitable than any other.

> " Expression is the dress of thought, and still
> Appears more decent as more suitable.
> Inferior thoughts in high-wrought modes expressed
> Are like a clown in regal purple dressed ;
> For different modes with different subjects sort,
> As several garbs with country, town, or court."

In the public reading of the Scriptures, the accentuation, emphasis, tone, modulation, &c., are certainly to be regarded, yet in a temperate manner only. Action with the hands, so suitable for oratory, must in reading the Scriptures be dispensed with, except; gently laying the hand on the book to give a little increased effect to an emphasis. The animated passions cannot be admitted in this kind of reading; but there should be a feeling of reverence and veneration engaged in the exercise, because the subject is the word of God; and this respectful feeling will give a suitable seriousness to the countenance. To acquire a suitable manner, as to this article, you must attend the reading of the best living examples; for no written advices will be of much avail.

The last observations, in regard to reading, apply very closely also to your public prayers. Here a chastised state of mind will forbid all ornaments of elocution; instead of which there should be the simple expression of a most fervent spirit, even a fervency that burns, and that will, as a means, kindle in the hearts of those that are waiting upon God with you. Your expression should evidently proceed from your very heart; and as to language, none is so pure and acceptable to real Christians as that which is drawn from the word of God, as Bishop Horsley observes. No book that I know of is so replete with suitable examples

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as Smith's System of Prayer; yet perhaps in this work the author labours too hard upon the point, and there is frequently an awkwardness of manner introduced by that excess of labour. I am of opinion that real piety, breathed in pure English style, neatly intermixed with Scripture language, is the most proper course; and be assured that the true spirit of prayer can never be brought to your aid in public unless it be cherished in secret communion with God. Here lies the great secret. God will not honour us in public if we do not honour him in private. It is in the closet that all our holy unction is obtained, even for the work of the ministry; and it is here, likewise, that the true manner of our public services is to be acquired.

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# LECTURE XX.

## TOPIC XVI.

### COMPARE WORDS AND ACTIONS WITH SIMILAR WORDS AND ACTIONS.

THE Evangelist speaks (Acts i. 1) of "the things that Jesus began to do and to teach." Now in Acts vii. 22, he says the same of Moses: "He was mighty in words and deeds." Here you may observe that these two things joined together—doing and teaching—are distinguishing characters of a true prophet, who never separates doctrine from practice. You may then make an edifying comparison between Moses and Jesus Christ. *Both did* and *taught;* but there was a very great difference between the teaching of the one and the other. One taught *justice*, the other *mercy*. One *abased*, the other *exalted*. One *terrified*, the other *comforted*. There was also a great difference between the *deeds* of the one and of the other. Most of the miracles of Moses were miracles of *destruction:* insects, frogs, hail, and other of the same kind, with which he chastised the Egyptians. But the miracles of Jesus Christ were always miracles of *benevolence:* raising the dead, giving sight to the blind, &c.

Robinson, under this article, quotes from Bishop Sanderson, who compares the thoughts of God with those of men, Prov. xix. 21: "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

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I. They differ in their *nature*. Ours are *devices—fancies;* God's are *counsels*—wise, deliberate *determinations.*

II. They differ in *number*. Our devices have multiplicity and variety, they are *many;* God's counsel is *one* uniform consistent plan.

III. They differ in their *manner* of *existing*. Our devices are in our *hearts*—in intention only; God's counsels *stand*—produce the intended effect."*

We further observe that this Topic is not only very extensively available in every kind of discourse, but has also this further advantage, that it is of a very popular character. Judiciously employed, whether by way of illustration, or for the purpose of confirming and establishing any truth, it can hardly fail to instruct the most illiterate of our hearers, who may be unable to follow a connected chain of abstract argument, and will at the same time commend itself to the more enlightened. The most important and interesting subjects which demand the preacher's attention are exhibited in the Scriptures under a great variety of aspects, expressed in different forms of speech, and mentioned in different connexions. In one passage a fact or doctrine is referred to incidentally, in others it is more largely narrated or discussed. In one place a sentiment is expressed in language highly figurative, in others it is stated in simple and explicit terms: at one time it is mentioned in connexion with an exhortation or a command, at another it is the subject of a divine promise, &c. It is therefore necessary, in such cases, to compare the language of any particular text with similar statements in other parts of the inspired volume, if we intend to convey a just and comprehensive view of the subject to our hearers.

If we are discoursing on the expressions or the example

* We shall in a future Lecture give a more ample account of this excellent discourse.

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of good men, we may bring before our hearers such similar expressions or actions as are calculated to show the uniform operation of the truth in the hearts of those who embrace it; the different degrees of excellence or infirmity exemplified in different individuals; the similarity discoverable between the conduct of the hypocrite and the sincere disciple, and the principles on which they differ, &c. If, on the other hand, the words or actions of wicked men come under our notice, as the subject of animadversion, we may compare them with similar statements in the Scriptures, with a view to lead the minds of our hearers to reflect on that total depravity in which all by nature participate; to show the insinuating influence and rapid progress of evil principles; to point out the bitter consequences of rebellion against God, which may be more evident from some statements with which your text may be properly compared, than from the text itself, &c.

It would not be difficult to supply examples from Scripture illustrative of all the foregoing remarks; but it will be sufficient to mention two or three cases in which the Topic may be employed. Suppose you were preaching on the conversion of the Philippian jailer: you may remark that the jailer was most probably a man of a ferocious and cruel disposition. When Paul and Silas were committed to his custody, with a charge to keep them safely, he appears to have been devoid of any feeling of common humanity. Without paying any attention whatever to their bleeding wounds, he thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. But when the glad tidings of the gospel had reached his heart, the lion was changed into a lamb. Then his bosom was no longer a stranger to tenderness. See Acts xvi. 24, 33. The jailer's conduct may be advantageously compared with that of Zaccheus the publican. There were many points of difference in their characters; but the comparison lies in this, that in both cases we see the ruling, the predominant evil of the heart, sub-

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dued by the power of the gospel. Injustice and oppression were the characteristic features of the publicans generally; and Zaccheus, who was chief among them, had perhaps become too rich through extortion, and was known to the Jews as a man who was emphatically a sinner. But when he was made acquainted with those things which belonged to his peace, his heart was no longer set on riches, and he not only came forward to restore fourfold to those whom he had wronged by false accusation, but the half of all that he possessed was also devoted to the relief of the poor, &c.

Again: suppose the character of Martha, the sister of Lazarus, to be the subject of discourse, you would naturally compare her conduct with that of Mary, and show the superiority of the latter. Both the sisters were strongly attached to Christ; and we are expressly told that "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." But there was a great difference in the degree of their attachment to him, and in the manner in which it was manifested. Martha was anxious to show her sense of gratitude and respect by the entertainment which she prepared: Mary seems to have forgotten every thing else through the interest which she felt in the instructions of her Lord, &c.

In the illustration which Claude has given us of this Topic, he institutes a comparison between Christ and Moses, in order to show that while there was some resemblance, both being mighty in miracles and in doctrine, there was a very great superiority in the doing and teaching of Christ.

The Topic is not, however, to be restricted to Scripture characters, but may be extended to every thing which is calculated to elucidate our subject in a way of comparison; and I shall here introduce an example from Walker, in which he illustrates the nature of the gospel ministry generally, by comparing it with the primitive ministry. His text is 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2: "Let a man so account of us as of



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the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God," &c.; and he proposes,

I. To explain the account given us in the text of the nature of our office, as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

II. To point out the corresponding obligations incumbent on Christians with regard to those intrusted with this ministry.

Under the former head of discourse he observes,

In order to have clear apprehensions of this subject it will be necessary to look back to the origin of the office, and see wherein it differed at its first appointment from the circumstances in which it exists at present. I commence by observing that the ministry of the word is, in all essential points, the same, ever since it was ordained as an employment. At the same time it is plain that several circumstances attending it are considerably varied. The ordinary call to the office which now takes place is very different from the miraculous mission by which men were consecrated to it in former times. Their vocation was more immediate, more striking, and attended with more ample powers as well as more splendid effects. From their immediate inspiration, an authority was derived to their words to which none of us can justly pretend. They promised, and the blessings of time and eternity were conveyed with their words; they threatened, and vengeance from heaven followed without delay. The apostles enjoyed from their Divine Master the communication of his own powers over nature, which they exercised even to a greater degree than Jesus himself chose to do.

All these extraordinary powers have now ceased. The pastors of the Christian church are now men in all respects like yourselves, to whom God has conveyed, by the hands of other men, authority to preach the word. Still, however, the original proposition stands true, namely, that the office is, in all essential points, the same as exercised both

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by them and us; for it is easy to conceive that the superior prerogatives which have been mentioned vary some circumstances in the ministry only, but do not in any degree alter its nature. The essence of the office, the foundations of pastoral authority, remain unimpaired. His promise is unalterable: "Behold, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."* From his holy hill, where he sits as King of Zion, he provides for the perpetuity of his church, and he does now give pastors and teachers, if not apostles and prophets, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

This at the present time is the state of the ministry amongst us; so that if the doctrines we set forth are agreeable to the Scriptures, if the morality we enforce is a conversation becoming the gospel, we are in all respects to be accounted of as "the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God," according to the words of the text; that is, we shall be worthy of these appellations if we be found *faithful.*—*Walker*, vol. iv.

One more view of comparison in reference to the ministry may not be unacceptable. Take 1 Pet. iv. 11: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God."

* It has been observed that the Holy Spirit uses three expressions to show the perpetuity of this promise: 1. Αιων, answering to the Hebrew word עולם, which imports a continuance to the end of the world. 2. Συντελεια εως της συντελειας του αιωνος. As the first expression is simply affirmative, the second is something like a denial of the contrary—the denial of a termination before the world's end. 3. Πασας τας ημερας, all days and successions of times; for it is not μεθ υμων ημερας υμων, "with you all your days," which might soon be ended; but it is πασας τας ημερας, "all days till days are no more." From which phrases it is evident that as a gospel ministry is to be perpetuated till days are done, so the divine presence will be commensurate therewith. It would betray too narrow an interpretation of this text, as to Christ's being with them to the end of the world, to say that he is no longer with them than they live in the world. It would yet be more absurd to say that their personal ministry was coeval with the world: wherefore the inference is obvious, that as the preaching of the gospel was the substance of their commission to all the world, so while the world stands there should be preachers thereof, and Christ's presence with them.—*Potts's Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 49.



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Now here is a presumption that some do not speak according to "the oracles of God." And here is the comparison. Paul, James, Peter, Jude, and John animadvert, in very severe terms, upon the principles and conduct of such men. These bold and presumptuous men dare to pass their vile notions for the oracles of God. These notions are forgeries: their early fathers were the false prophets with whom such men as Elijah, and particularly Jeremiah, had to contend. They are not to be known by their garments, nor by their canting expressions, nor by their bold assumptions, but by the infallible rule of our Saviour: "By their fruits ye shall know them." These fruits are various, and their wiles many. Immorality: "Professing to know God, in works they deny him." Or they "separate themselves;" this is a mark of easy discernment. They wish their people to become a selfish people, and their unity is not the unity of the gospel. True gospel unity is not a party spirit, but a universal spirit; it aims at uniting all mankind. Or these false teachers separate doctrine and practice, the means from the end, one part of God's word from other parts, placing one set of texts in array against another; or they are destitute of Christian charity, meekness, love, and forbearance, or impatient of all control and every degree of authority, though ever so slight and ever so scriptural. Others are deniers of Christ's proper divinity, of free grace, and justification by faith; or of Christ's perpetual ordinances, or introducers of ordinances and sacraments which Christ never ordained. They are cavillers and disputers, mixers of Christianity and philosophy; "from such turn away:" for one is weary of naming more of their absurdities. But, in favour of some amongst the private hearers of such mischievous leaders, we must make a difference. They are the led of such leaders as I have named; the deceived, not deceivers. "The Lord knoweth them that are his."

Now, on the other hand, the true ministers "speak ac-

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cording to the oracles of God" as to all main and essential subjects, and in general, though they may differ in particular articles, yet they "hold the Head." The word of God is their rule, the foundation of their doctrines; the Spirit of God is their instructor. Instead of being proud and self-willed, they allow themselves to be led, knowing their own ignorance, weakness, and insufficiency; instead of following their own fancies, they think and "speak according to the oracles of God."

The word here called oracles (from an Old Testament usage) is *the rule.* These oracles are known to be divine from their perfect conformity to the divine nature—that notion of the divine nature which, even without Scripture, evidently pertains to him, though seen more clearly in Scripture light.

1. Is God a spirit? His word (law and gospel), with all its important contents, is of a spiritual nature: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life:" John vi. 63. "The law is spiritual:" Rom. vii. 14, and viii. 2.

2. Is our blessed Redeemer "the Lord God omnipotent?" His gospel is "the power of God to salvation:" Rom. i. 16.

3. Is God all-sufficient? So are "the holy Scriptures able to make wise unto salvation:" 2 Tim. iii. 15—17.

4. Is he a king to exercise kingly power? The word is his bow by which he subdues the people under him: Ps. xix. 7; Hab. iii. 9; Eph. vi. 17; Heb. iv. 12; 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

5. Is he a judge? He will judge every man according to Christ's gospel: Rom. ii. 16.

6. Is Christ the true God and eternal life? His word is the word of truth: John i. 17. The words of eternal life: John vi. 68.

7. Is he faithful? His word is the faithful word: Ps. cxix. 138.

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8. Is God just? His word is the word of righteousness: Heb. vi. 13.

9. Is he God our Saviour? His gospel is the word of our salvation: Acts xiii. 26.

10. Is he unchangeable? The gospel is the everlasting gospel: Mark xiii. 31; Rev. xiv. 6.

11. Is he all-wise? In his word "he has abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence: Eph. i. 8.

12. Is he a sovereign ruler? His word is his will: Matt. vii. 21; 2 Tim. iv. 14, 15.

13. Is he full of grace? The gospel is the word of his grace: Acts xx. 24, 32.

14. Is he essentially good? His word is good: Rom. vii. 12.

15. Is he holy? His word is pure: Ps. cxix. 140.

16. Is he wonderful? His testimonies are wonderful: Ps. cxix. 129.

17. Is Christ precious? His promises are so: 2 Pet. i. 4.

18. Is he unsearchable? His gospel is the unsearchable riches of Christ: Eph. iii. 8.*

Now here is a conformity between the character of God and of Christ and the holy oracles; and, as there is a perfect conformity between the character of God and the excellency of his word, so there must be a like conformity between this divine word and the matter of our preaching. As Moses had very strict orders respecting the tabernacle—he was to "make all things according to the pattern showed him in the mount"—so preachers are to preach exactly according to truth. To this end their preaching must be pure and entire: pure in the matter, entire as to the substance. In all kinds of doctrinal, practical, and evangelical subjects, they must conform to the word, the whole word, and nothing but the word; and if you look over the various complaints of Christ and his apostles, concerning those that have endeavoured to corrupt the word of God, going

* Eades's View, part 2, chap. vi.

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through the whole of the New Testament with this particular view, you will obtain great light upon the subject. If, on the other hand, we examine the whole Scriptures for ourselves, to see what is exhibited for truth, and in what light and on what occasions they were respectively written, and the objects to which they were evidently designed to lead, &c., we shall be in a condition to preach "according to the oracles of God." And if this be done carefully and diligently, with much prayer to God, you will be able to preach the divine oracles without much assistance from the theories of men, even of the best of men, and with the very least liability of error.

Among the subjects which will come under your notice in relation to this Topic, you will sometimes be called upon to *compare the threatenings of God with their fulfilment.* In many instances recorded in Scripture the agreement is awfully minute: as the destruction of the antediluvian world, Sodom and Gomorrah, &c. Here the comparison is perfectly easy; but in many instances threatenings have been suspended or reversed, and these present a difficulty which requires much of caution and of wisdom. We must either admit that such threatenings were not intended to be taken absolutely and unconditionally, though no conditions are expressed; or that our ordinary ideas of the divine unchangeableness are incorrect, though apparently justified by the strongest expressions of Scripture, and agreeing with the clearest deductions of reason.

The awful threatenings of absolute reprobation in regard to their temporal state, have been fulfilled in many recorded instances where the parties have filled up the measure of their iniquities, as the Sodomites, the Canaanites, &c.; subjects in whom the light of nature and of conscience had ceased to operate, who had "given themselves over to work all kinds of iniquity with greediness." These characters brought themselves into this state: they

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passed their day of trial without any improvement, and therefore "judgment came upon them to the uttermost," and the only end remaining was that they might become examples of "the righteous judgment of God." In some of these instances special warnings were given. "Noah was a preacher of righteousness to the antediluvians, but without effect:" in other instances we do not know that any special communication was made. The Sodomites had it not; and this did give a relief to their character, for our Lord intimates that, if they had received such communications, they would or they might have repented; but they sinned against the light of nature and the holy example of Lot, and they perished without warning in any special form, to which they had no claim on the ground of justice. In other instances Jehovah, as supreme governor of the world, has passed threatenings on nations which had not their effect for a long season; these threatenings were not communicated to the wicked nations themselves, but mentioned as private communications to his servants the prophets; for usually "the Lord did nothing but he revealed his secret to the prophets," Amos iii. 7: which was remarkably fulfilled in the intimation made to Abram respecting Sodom; and in the Revelations it is said to John, "Come, and I will show you the judgment of the great whore." Yet the grace of regular warnings seems not to have been given for reasons above assigned. In these and similar cases the threatenings and their accomplishments were written "within and without;" in the mind of God, and by outward intimations to the prophets. There seem also to be many threatenings against the Lord's people if they depart from their steadfastness, or alter their course from good to bad; as Rom. viii. 13, "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die;" even here there must be a saving clause for returning backsliders, and such a sentence may in the hands of the Spirit bring the backslider to a sense of his guilt and danger; upon this Mr. Caryl says, "They

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who are above all curses may be threatened with a curse, and they who shall certainly be preserved from doing that which inevitably brings the curse may be told of a curse in case they should do it."*

Having premised these remarks I now proceed to observe that, apart from such instances, whenever God has condescended to hold any intercourse with his sinning creatures by sending a message to them, though conveyed in the form of a threatening, it is a certain indication that they were not absolutely reprobated. I submit that if any of the antediluvians had repented, by the preaching of Noah, a place of refuge would have been provided for them: and that wherever a denunciation has been conveyed to a people, it carries, whether expressed or not, an implied contingency, that if they repented they might and would be saved; the case of the Ninevites, left upon record for an eternal truth, is exactly to the point. Now if this be correct the difficulty is surmounted; God's justice, truth, and unchangeableness are not compromised in the least. God wills a further day of trial to his sinning creatures; he puts it upon this issue. Whether it be said simply "Ye shall perish," or whether it be expressed "Except ye repent ye shall perish," it makes no difference at all. The very circumstance of a communication speaks for itself; it proves that "the day of grace is not passed:" therefore sentences reversed are no reflection upon the character of Jehovah; they are in perfect agreement with all just legislation, and are not at variance with the divine prescience.

* Upon this difficult subject I refer to Watson's Theological Institutes; vol. i., p. 419, 420; again, 442—446; Magee on the Atonement, vol. i., p. 136. I shall only quote Dr. Jortin, vol. i., p. 29, on Exodus xx. 5, 6. "When God threatens, he threatens what he may do, not what he must do: though he be obliged by his perfections to do nothing unjust, he is not obliged to do every thing that may possibly be done."



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I choose to put the question upon this representation rather than upon what has been asserted, "That God *changes not*, but he *wills a change*," which I confess I cannot understand. This must still be a *willing* and a counter willing; but upon my humble suggestions you have only to admit the implied accompaniment to the threatening, and this knotty point is untied.

I submit that a righteous, intelligent, and good governor, will rule his creatures in this manner. He will preserve in his determinations a view to man as an accountable creature, as a rational probationary, to be influenced by hope and fear to choose the wisest course; otherwise we had better at once return to the notion of the Stoics, "that all things are governed by a certain and inevitable necessity."

I further beg leave to say, lest I should be supposed to give up a doctrine which I firmly believe, that God has in some instances given no special warnings, but has in others given such warnings, wherein much sovereignty is seen; so God can exercise a further act of grace towards his sinning creatures; he can secretly and specially give, incline, and dispose some of them, not only to repentance, but to faith in his mercy: and it is hence that the Ninevites expressed such faith as a peradventure: "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" Jonah iii. 2. And as he inclined the idolatrous Lydia, by "opening her heart," sometimes he saves a "brand from the burning" and the chief of sinners, and this without destroying man's free agency, or tarnishing his adorable perfections, which he exercises with a sovereign hand.

But to return to the comparison, or the comparing of God's threatenings with their fulfilments: you have here a view how to make use of this Topic in preaching to sinners. I have said that wherever God sends a message to a

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people by a preacher of the gospel, and the gospel in his hand as his warrant, it is always to be presumed that the people are not reprobated; if they were, an overruling providence would withhold this gospel; you may therefore excite fears and hopes; you may adduce instances of sundry threatenings against sinners, and compare them with sundry fulfilments, as the apostles Peter and Jude did, and especially as Paul did in the third and fourth chapters of his Epistle to the Hebrews; and you may say with all boldness, "How shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation, &c." This comparison of things is well adapted to awaken "the dead in sin:" your instances are of the most unexceptionable character, your position is firm, and your inference cannot be denied; nay, you may say that ancient refusals of mercy were not attended with the same aggravated guilt which is connected with the rejection of mercy under the clear discoveries of the gospel, which at its beginning was spoken by our Lord Jesus himself with the most wonderful display of miracles, and which is evidenced to this day to us by those who wrote the gospel history. Here, I say, keep close and faithfully to the comparison, and suffer them not to escape the consequence of that comparison.

The same course must be taken in respect to any that may have declined from the gospel; and perhaps this is the true point of St. Paul's argument above quoted. The Israelites were lost, or many of them, by the spirit of apostasy; for in their hearts they "turned back to Egypt:" their unbelief was predominant over all kinds of miracles and authorities. But the more agreeable part of your duty remains; that is, to say with Paul in another place, and which is quoted from prophecy and applied to the gospel dispensation, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation:" you may announce that even now, bad as their case is, they are not as yet reprobated; that it is yet "the day of salvation." And here you may

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enter into another comparison of facts. As the Hebrew Christians in St. Paul's time "did actually by believing enter into rest"—the earnest of heaven felt in their hearts —so you may assure sinners that on their believing the testimony of the gospel they shall even now enjoy that justifying grace which brings peace with it; thus you excite and operate both upon fear and hope.

Another subject of some importance suggested by our Topic is that of *comparing the commands of Scripture with its promises.* This will often furnish much that is instructive and edifying, and is necessary in order to solve as far as possible the apparent inconsistency of commands being given to subjects unable to perform the things enjoined, and to calm the disquietudes of those who feel their own insufficiency to "enter into peace" by accurate compliance with the commands, as a means of obtaining the blessings or the promises annexed to them. On this account they are apt to "write bitter things against themselves."

We undoubtedly allow the force of the commands; and the necessity of the divine assistance to obey them must be ceded to us. The commands stand upon the right which God has over us as his creatures; the promises stand upon his purpose of grace: the command is to direct; the promise is to cheer and to console. Man's inability, alas! is too evident to need demonstration, but if any were necessary, it is to be found in the several prayers of God's people offered up for assistance, which needed not to have been offered if they had not been conscious of inability; this inability however, let us remember, resolves itself wholly into the waywardness of the human heart, being altogether of a moral and not a physical nature. The late Mr. Wilks some years ago considered this subject, and drew up a scheme and collection of commands, each accompanied with a scriptural prayer for ability to obey it,

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and also with an absolute promise. The work to which I refer is entitled Scripture Harmony; and lest this little production should be lost through its minuteness, or at least may not fall into the hands of the majority of my readers, I shall transcribe into these pages a portion of it, the value of which every divinity student will readily appreciate.

"Much has been said, by many good but mistaken people, concerning our ability to fulfil what they term the *conditions* of the New Covenant. Much of the preceptive part of revelation has been referred to in support of this opinion, and the common plausible conclusions drawn from such Scriptures is, 'that it is inconsistent in the Divine Being to enjoin what we are unable to perform:' this sentiment, as it is flattering to human nature, has seduced some, and frequently distressed others. The present design therefore is to show the Scripture bearings upon this subject. Here in every instance we have, 1. A command. 2. A supplication for aid. And 3. A direct promise of such aid.

Ezek. xviii. 31: Make you a new heart, &c.
Ps. li. 10: Create in me a clean heart, O God.
Ezek. xxxvi. 26: A new heart also will I give you.

1 Cor. v. 7: Purge out the old leaven, &c.
Ps. li. 7: Purge me with hyssop, &c.
Isa. i. 25: I will purge away thy dross.

Ezek. xxxiii. 11: Turn ye from your evil ways, &c.
Jer. xxxi. 18: Turn thou me, and I shall be turned.
Rom. xi. 26: There shall come out of Zion a deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

Amos iv. 12: Prepare to meet thy God, &c.
1 Chron. xxix. 18: Prepare their hearts unto thee.
Ps. x. 17: Thou wilt prepare their heart.

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Eph. v. 14: Awake, thou that sleepest.
Ps. cxix. 25.: Quicken thou me, &c.
John v. 25: The dead shall hear my voice.

Isa. lv. 2: Eat ye that which is good.
Ps. xc. 14: Satisfy us with thy mercy.
Jer. xxxi. 14: I will satisfy them with fatness; they shall be satisfied with my goodness.

1 Chron. xxviii. 9: Know thou the God of thy fathers.
Exod. xxxiii. 13: Show me now thy ways.
Jer. xxxi. 14: They shall all know me.

Isa. lv. 6: Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found.
Job xxiii. 3: O that I knew where I might find him!
Jer. xxix. 13, 14: Ye shall find me, &c.

Rev. iii. 18: Anoint thine eyes, &c.
Ps. cxix. 18: Open thou mine eyes, &c.
Isa. xxix. 18: The blind shall see out of obscurity, &c.

Job xxii. 22: Receive the law of his mouth, &c.
Ps. cxix. 36: Incline mine heart, &c.
Jer. xxxi. 33: I will write my law in their hearts, &c.

Prov. iv. 23: Keep thy heart with all diligence.
Ps. xxv. 20: O keep my soul and deliver me.
Isa. xxvii. 3: I the Lord do keep it, &c.

2 Chron. xx. 20: Believe in the Lord your God.
Acts xvi. 31: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
Mark ix. 24: Help thou mine unbelief, &c.
Zeph. iii. 12: They shall trust in the name of the Lord.

Acts ii. 40: Save yourselves, &c.
Jer. xvii. 14: Save me, and I shall be saved.
Isa. xlv. 17: Israel shall be saved, &c.

Isa. i. 16: Wash you, make you clean.
Ps. li. 2: Wash me throughly, &c.
Ezek. xxxvi. 25: I will sprinkle clean water, &c.

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Ezek. xviii. 31: Cast away all your transgressions.
Hos. xiv. 2: Take away all iniquity.
Isa. vi. 7: Thine iniquity is taken away.

Hag. i. 5: Thus saith the Lord, Consider your ways.
Ps. cxix. 5: O that my ways were directed, &c.
Ezek. xxxvi. 31: Then shall ye remember your evil ways.

Isa. xxvi. 20: Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers; hide thyself, &c.
Ps. xvii. 8: Keep me as the apple of thine eye.
Job v. 21: Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of tongues.

Matt. xi. 28: Come unto me, all ye that labour.
Cant. i. 4: Draw me, and we will run after thee.,
John vi. 37: All that the Father giveth shall come to me.

Matt. xi. 29: Learn of me, &c.
Job xxxiv. 32: That which I see not, teach thou me.
John vi. 45: They shall be all taught of God.

John xv. 4: Abide in me.
Ps. li. 11: Cast me not away from thee.
John x. 28: They shall never perish.

Rom. vi. 12: Let not sin reign in you.
Ps. xix. 13: Keep back thy servant, &c.
Rom. vi. 4: Sin shall not have dominion, &c.

Gal. v. 1: Stand fast, therefore, &c.
Ps. cxix. 117: Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.
Rom. xiv. 14: He shall be holden up.

Mark xiv. 38: Watch and pray, lest ye enter, &c.
Matt. vi. 13: Lead us not into temptation.
1 Cor. x. 13: He will not suffer you to be tempted above your strength.

1 Thes. v. 17: Pray without ceasing.
Luke xi. 1: Lord, teach us to pray.
Zech. xii. 10: I will pour out, &c.

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Compare again these passages, viz.:

1 Pet. v. 8, 9; Ps. xxii. 21; Rom. xvi. 20. 2 Pet. iii. 18; Hab. iii. 2; Hos. xiv. 7. Rev. ii. 10; Ps. xxv. 21; Isa. xlvi. 4.

I think no preacher can go far in his work without meeting some difficulty upon the subject of commands, and especially as many are to be found in the New Testament, which we are accustomed to think savours most of grace; nay, I think the greater number are to be found here. A judicious preacher will therefore so conduct himself as to remove the difficulties which these distinct kinds of texts impose upon his care. The mere exhibition of such a list of Scriptures as that just now given will not effect the object, though the view itself is proper enough. The commands are not to be neutralized to mean nothing at all; to use a vulgar expression, they are not to be set up to be knocked down again; there must be some inquiry into the principles upon which they are established (twelfth Topic). We ought to consider the divine authority that the commands bear. This authority must never be lost sight of; the gospel was never intended to abrogate or diminish or suspend it: "If I be a master, where is my fear? If I be a father, where is my honour?" Mal. i. 6. This fear or this honour is founded in his just authority. Allow me then to suggest that our subjection to the divine commands is our acknowledgment of this authority, and that every thing, whether found in the Old Testament or the New, that bears the character of authority or command, "is holy, just, and good" (Rom. vii. 12), and should be directed to its proper and legitimate effect, either to direct or convince. Antinomians (properly so called) here stand convicted:—every disposition to laxity of conduct here finds a suitable corrective. There is also a principle cognizable in the divine commands which is of a most benign nature,

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and which most delightfully softens the before-mentioned considerations, and ought to attract our love to the commands. This principle has respect to the *reward* of the righteous; the reward of grace; a reward that the gospel opens to us, and which is peculiar to itself and quite distinct from the reward attaching to the original law of our creation, or that of a perfect performance of the written law. This is the reward of obedience, for every act at the final judgment, whether it be bad or good, is to "receive a just recompence of reward;" and to this Moses had respect, Heb. xi. 26. The manner in which our blessed Saviour adverts to this subject, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, shows that it is the very principle of God's legislative justice: which, so far from contravening the freeness of redemption by Christ, does very wonderfully and graciously operate in unison with it. Here then we find one design of the commands in question: had there been no commands, there could not properly have been any obedience; and, if no obedience, then no reward: therefore in such a case the righteous had lost their crown, their honour, their distinction—the public testimony of their acts which the "God of all grace" will at the last day make manifest to all worlds. Thus the commands lay the foundation for a part of the joy of the righteous. Surely we have here some rich gems of great value, and we would not have one command, even the most trying to human nature, expunged from the divine word.

Again: God will bring forward these commands at the last day, and the acts of obedience to them, to stand as the most manifest proofs to all intelligent creatures of the justice of his sentence of life and blessedness; and the very disobeyers of those commands, who will then reap the fruit of their disobedience, will be compelled to allow that their sentence is just.

Undoubtedly, the commands are also designed to convince of sin in order to repentance, and to lead to humble

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prayer for recovering and helping grace, and for the exercise of faith in the promises of such grace and help. The texts just quoted fall in with this last idea. For this purpose they were collected and arranged, and for this purpose I have transcribed them.

I hope what I have submitted to you on the subject of the commands will enable you properly to compare things together, according to the suggestion of our Topic, and to preach consistently and scripturally. To represent every subject to the people is an important art, and must be attained, that we may not "darken counsel by words without knowledge." "We should," says Mr. Caryl, "labour to deliver our minds plainly concerning the mind of God, that what we utter may not tend to perplexity, but, as much as in us lies, a clearing of the word; as we profess to give light in dark cases, so we ought to act; and the prayerful student, while he looks habitually to the great Source of light and knowledge, will not only give the people the result of his own studies, but that also which he is taught of God, and which is infinitely preferable."

In the last head of discourse commands took the lead, and in this the promises of Scripture take the lead. If the last section had its difficulties, this will have its greater share. It is a very easy thing to jump over or pass by difficulties, and perhaps sometimes it is the safest; but it is better if possible to obviate them, and so make the way somewhat smoother for followers. One of these difficulties is to reconcile promises apparently conditional, and affecting our salvation, and title to it or comfort of it, with the unconditional and unchangeable purposes of God, which nothing can reverse; "for the gifts and callings of God are without repentance." We are deeply concerned in both these important points. No doubt one is given for our caution, the other for our comfort; but when we consider the different course of their operation, and the different principles

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upon which they appear to turn, we seem to be presented with the view of the prophet, "a WHEEL *in the midst of a wheel*" (Ezek. i. 16)—something complex to us, however true. A wheel within a wheel; one moving in a straight the other in a transverse direction, and yet, in some way unknown to us, the double action is but one. The unconditional expressed purpose of Jehovah may be perhaps fitly represented by the principal wheel, always progressing; always fulfilling the divine designs in grace, which "wait not for man." In this compartment of divine truth we hear such language as this: "I will work, and none shall let." "Have I said, and shall I not do it?" "The counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." The sins of the Jews did not, as it is pretended, prevent the advent of the Messiah; "but, when the fulness of time was come," the Saviour appeared. Herod could not murder him; the Jews' malice could not suppress his gracious acts and doctrines. Here we shall read with advantage the second Psalm, in connexion with references to it in Acts iv. 25—28; also Isa. xxviii. 16. To the same account we place the promises respecting the work of the Spirit, as Joel ii. 28—32 and Zech. xii. 10, connected with the out-pouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and the mighty power of the word in its progress to evangelize the world. Here the co-operation of human agency can only be resolved into the purpose itself. The divine right to employ it, direct it, and succeed it, did not depend on the will of man, but on the power and authority of God.

Here every thing is very clear; but then in Ezekiel's vision we find the inner wheels, giving as I should suppose a transverse motion, having a real but secret connexion with the principal wheel; representing perhaps that economy of the divine government by which, while cause and effect in any individual action are secured, yet an agency is called forth, apparently permitted to will or not to will, to whom something is electively committed. In

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the first case the divine will takes the lead, in this second a human agent seems to take the lead. If we do so and so, such a blessing will be bestowed. As "draw nigh unto God and he will draw nigh unto you:" James iv. 8. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and I will receive you:" 2 Cor. vi. 17. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light: Eph. v. 14. "Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find:" Matt. vii. 7. If any man open unto me, I will come in to him:" Rev. iii. 20. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved: "Acts xvi. 31. "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out:" John vi. 37. Besides which there are hundreds more which we consider as conditional promises, or as declarations of what will necessarily fall out, as an effect follows a cause, and which any wise man would easily see must result from such and such conduct, as Rom. viii. 13; but still it is clear that any really conditional or regulated promise hangs upon something to be done by us, and we see that, wherever the regulation is observed, God is not slack concerning the fulfilment of his promises; for it is in all cases true that, if we draw nigh to God, he does draw nigh to us; if we seek, we do find; if we believe, we are saved; if we come to Christ, he does receive us; and if we refuse to come to him, we are not received. These are unquestionable facts. It is evident that we are dealt with here as rational and accountable creatures. Now, whether we see it or not, there is no doubt a connexion between the general purpose of God and the free agency of man. The general purpose may rationally consist with the disposing of men's minds to the due use of appointed means. The work of converting grace supposes such influence; and our working out our own salvation with fear and trembling does not exclude God's working in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure: Phil. ii. 12, 13. So that when, agreeably to our Topic, we compare the promises with the condi-

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tions annexed, we do it with great advantage to ourselves, and shall be enabled to adjust a case of conscience upon it for the benefit of our hearers: seeing that this wheel in the midst of a wheel, having a transverse motion, does not offer any insuperable difficulty; "for at last," as good Mr. Bayne* says, "the will is subject to grace, and not grace to the will." God is still free in the exercise of his sovereignty; in disposing the mind to himself, even in an act of rebellion, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus when intent on persecuting the saints of God.

Thus far, my brethren, I think you may proceed, that is, to justify the divine procedure, his just right to establish his own purposes, to carry them into execution against all opposition, to exact from man the concurrence of his will, to place him under responsibilities, to give encouragement to exertion, and to put means into his hands for this purpose which he has so much interest in improving. Thus far we have real and practical utility in comparing the state of things till we understand their bearings, till we apprehend what the mind and will of God is upon those points in which a well-regulated ministry is so much concerned, and in which the light of private Christians is either diminished or promoted. We ought to give them as much satisfaction as we can; but into deep speculations and disputations enter not; I never knew any good done by them. Human weakness is not to be trusted far into the intricacy and secret connexion between the principal and subordinate wheels of the divine administration. Practical utility is the point at which you are to aim, and at which you are to stop. As often as necessary you will maintain the sovereignty of God, that he has a right, in willing an end, to will also the means, to arm those means with necessary efficacy, and to support them by his promises; and you

* The divine alluded to was Paul Bayne, of St. Andrew's College, Cambridge. His work on Ephesians is in some parts insufficient; in others very excellent; which observation, I think, will apply to divinity works in general of that age.

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will represent that there is a perfect analogy with this divine method in the natural world. Here God wills a crop, but wills also the needful culture and labour. God wills light to the world, but makes the heavenly bodies subservient to this end. He wills our spiritual improvement, and all means in connexion with it. Nor can there be any thing more reasonable or more honourable to us than placing talents in our hands that we may increase them; making us the agents of our own happiness; accepting, in kindness, the co-operation of our poor endeavours with his purposes; putting a number of regulated promises into the hands of those who are so deeply interested in their object; putting us upon nothing less than self-preservation and self-interest; honouring his creature with an active agency suited to a renewed state, an activity too so necessary to our spiritual health as well as our improvement; putting us upon the exercise of our faith in the divine word, upon the expectancies of hope; making us examples of success in the use of means; giving us a blessed experience that the Lord is gracious, and a blessed foretaste of "the grace that we are to receive at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

This view of things places our religion above the suspicion of fanaticism; and if these conditional promises had been withheld, the loss had been very great; there would have been no suitability between the economy under which we are placed and the common nature of man. There had been a strange anomaly exhibited to us, which all the wisdom of philosophy could never have reconciled or accounted for. We have therefore much reason to be grateful that the economy of grace is so suited to our state and to every thing that is remedial which that state requires.

Allow me, therefore, to show more at large that these conditional promises are actually and experimentally of a beneficial nature, and their not standing as a part of the sacred Scripture would be a very great calamity.

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1. I observe, in the first place, that a Christian is necessarily influenced by hope and fear in spiritual things. He comes under these influences in conversion; and, in proportion as he is actuated by them, his spiritual life is to be estimated as lively, or dull, or languishing. I do not say that these are the only motives to action, because love is equally essential; but it must be admitted that hope and fear are principal motives of determination as to man's conduct. The hope of reward influenced Moses's choice; and the apostle says, "Let us also fear, lest" such and such consequences follow. Now try the issue upon a single regulated promise of our dear Lord and Master: "Ask, and ye shall have; seek, and ye shall find," &c. Does not the promise actually and experimentally operate upon the believer's mind? Is he not influenced to pray by the very terms of the promise? and is he not put into a state of fear that if he do not so seek he will not find or obtain that which is the matter of petition? Certainly we must answer in the affirmative. Here is a proof of the excellence and utility of a conditional promise, and, however dead his frame of mind may be, when he connects with this the promise of a spirit of grace and supplication—the assurance that the Spirit will help his infirmities, though with groanings which cannot be uttered—does he not resolve, "thy face will I seek. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning?" Now this is such a plain case of utility that no doubt remains.

2. The weakness of our common nature requires such stimuli, in all variety. Does the Saviour say, "Come unto me, and ye shall find rest for your souls?" The believer answers, "I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God: in thee the destitute find mercy." Take but a review of all these promises, and you will perceive that all of them tend to action, the very essence of the Christian life; that they enter on all possible things and circumstances with an accuracy of foreknowledge that is very wonderful;

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an intimate acquaintance with our wants, which nothing but omniscience could discern, or infinite goodness could supply; and yet not one too much. Again: there are promises to our due observance of the Lord's institutions, and of all other obligations rightly regarded. There are promises to encourage our trust and confidence in every season of affliction or sorrow. There are promises made to the exercise of every Christian grace, and they are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus. Now suppose the absence of these, or their existence without the condition under which they are given; in either case the want must be severely felt, both to the private Christian, and more especially to the preachers of the gospel, who could never, with all their ingenuity, furnish a substitute. In former times, more than at present, it was the practice of preachers to urge to activity from motives collected from heathen philosophers; this was indeed a miserable shift: but, if the funds of eloquence which these promises supply were wanted, we must go again to the schools of Athens for topics of discourse; and we might say of the pulpit "the glory is departed." I hope it has been sufficiently shown that these promises have an important place in Scripture, and they have an immediate tendency to the instruction and comfort of all who really believe them, and must be used accordingly.

3. Does not the Christian stand in continual need of some evidence of his state before God, and especially in the dark and cloudy day? What better evidence can he have than the agreement as to the state of his mind and that which is the object of the promises? This is not the case with a hypocrite; he wants the promises, but wants them without that state of the heart to which the promises have respect. The believer can, on the contrary, appeal to God for his sincerity, that he only desires the promises in God's own way, and believes that God will work in him to will and to do of his own good pleasure; and this, I say, is an enviable estate: his will, which God first looks at, is

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always present to promote the purposes of grace according to grace received; the Spirit of God witnesses with his Spirit that he is a child of God. Our business therefore is to compare the promises with the requirements annexed to them; and though we may find an apparent dissimilarity of principles, such as has been stated, yet we shall not be led to any unfavourable result, for we are here under sovereign protection. God himself has made these two principles one, and what he has joined together let no man put asunder. Privilege and obligation united will be offensive only to a distempered or perverted mind: and when we compare the one with the other, we shall see their fitness and propriety; we shall see the wisdom and goodness of God in placing them thus before us; we shall endeavour to carry on the design by giving our people the utmost satisfaction in our power as to their expediency, utility, and beauty; we shall endeavour to prevent them from any misunderstanding which might be conceived upon the point; we shall not allow it to be thought that there is any merit in meeting the regulation or requirement, for in fact God's own grace confers the qualification as well as the benefit; we shall not allow any to be discouraged from an apprehension of their inability to meet the requirement, since the humble are under a special protection; we shall hold a just balance, give the full weight of all the consolations to be derived from the unchangeable love of God (Rom. viii. 39), and all needful caution, that none may presume without a fair and scriptural ground.

Though not entering into the original intention of our Topic, I offer no apology for directing your minds to a branch of comparison which appears to me of some utility; viz., *comparing the works of God with the word of God.* This will lead us to examine whether our faith can really be benefited, and we made more efficient ministers of the gospel, by such comparison. Is there any such connexion



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between the natural and moral or spiritual world, as to lead to the inference that they are counterparts of each other, formed with the design of carrying into effect one great and worthy end, which separately could not be so well effected? Or shall we find that these two economies are really two distinct considerations, without any manner of connexion whatever? The apparent similarities which invite our inquiry, and which are very striking, must be either the effect of design, or of what is called accident; and it appears to me that the most rational conclusion is the former: the resemblances were, it is presumed, designed for some great end, and that end must be the instruction of man.

Objections to this view of the subject have arisen. Sensitive Christians, zealous for the honour of Scripture literally translated or understood, have placed themselves against it; they are afraid of committing themselves to what they conceive an unsafe theory, as they are in another case to affix a spiritual sense to any historical or ceremonial passage, lest they should fall into the rank of enthusiasts. There are others who think that the word of God is the only source of instruction to mankind; and who are timorous of looking into the volume of nature, because infidels derive their religion from this source, and because some persons of a visionary turn of mind have brought the study into some discredit. I cannot however think a sentiment unsafe that is warranted by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and which has been viewed in its just light by such names as Bishops Horne, Butler, and Horsley, to which I add the late Rev. Mr. Romaine, Parkinson, Jones of Nayland, and many others—men who have been esteemed among the brightest ornaments of the church. I do not doubt the sufficiency of Scripture; but I beg leave to say that the volume of nature is recognized in Scripture much more broadly and extensively than many other things which we generally receive. I am not inclined to abandon a system or sentiment because it has been abused, since such abuse

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could only arise out of an acknowledgment of its truth, and out of the same kind of zeal which has brought religion itself into some discredit. I am not inclined to abandon the works of God because infidels establish, or pretend to establish, their religion upon them—if theirs can be called a religion at all. These characters are not destitute of intelligence; and, whatever be their sin, they admit that the finger of God is visible throughout universal nature, and that instruction is to be derived from what they hear, see, and feel: but this is their sin, they aim a deadly blow at revelation, through a vain pretence of the sufficiency of natural religion. We admit their premises, that nature is instructive; but we deny their conclusion, that revelation is unnecessary. I am sorry to observe that there is a disposition in man to lower the divine designs, which we are told are as much "higher than our thoughts as the heavens are above the earth;" and again, that "God's thoughts are very deep." But why should it be thought a thing incredible to us that God should so have constructed the visible things of his natural creation as to render them an image of his moral government in many material points? in how many we cannot tell. Do we not frequently find combinations where at first we saw but a simple act? Is this one of the most mysterious things imaginable? Or rather is it not so plain that he "that runs may read?" Is not the greater part of the figurative language of Scripture built upon resemblances to nature? and if we admit the metaphors, we must admit the connexion. It seems to me a littleness of mind to suppose that the coincidences observable between the volume of nature and that of inspiration originated in mere accident, like the famous "fortuitous concourse of atoms which tumbled together and produced this world," but how, nobody could tell! As we believe that this frame of nature was contrived in all its parts to answer many and different purposes, by a sagacity that is infinite; so I presume



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we may believe that among other combinations the natural world was so ordered at the first as to provide materials of instruction to man. Hence we find in Scripture such pointed references from one to the other as the following: "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it:" Isa. lv. 10, 11. "As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations:" Isa. lxi. 11. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel knoweth not me, my people doth not consider:" Isa. i. 3. "All creatures," says Caryl in his admirable commentary on Job, "have a teaching voice, and read us divinity lectures of Divine Providence. There are four things which the creatures teach us; they teach us there is a God, and much concerning him: Rom. i. 20. Even the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." The creatures teach us ready obedience to the will of God, in that all creatures obey the law of their creation; fire and hail, snow and vapour, stormy winds and tempests, fulfil his word; Ps. cxlviii. 8. They teach us dependance upon God. Things without life are exhibited as putting forth acts of faith: Hos. ii. 21. "The earth cries to the heavens; and the corn, and the wine, and the oil, cry to the earth." The whole creation teaches that there is something further provided for us than what we now enjoy. The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for further manifestations: Rom. viii. 19. "Ask," says Job, "the beasts, and they will tell

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thee." So many creatures, so many teachers. The ox teaches to know our bountiful Lord. The ant preaches industry to man. We are again excited to look to the feathered creation for instruction. The fowls of the heavens seek their meat from God. "The stork knoweth her appointed times; the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgments of the Lord:" Jer. viii. 7. "The heathen indeed," as Mr. Jones of Nayland has observed, "regarded the world as a parable, the literal or bodily part of which is manifest to all men, while the hidden meaning is known only to the wise; that is, the moral in the fable, or the interpretation of the parable, was above vulgar apprehensions." Now that which was a mystery to the heathen is none to the Christian with the Bible in his hand; the secret is opened by Scripture, and the connexion of things is clearly unfolded. Whoever therefore sees this plan with an unprejudiced mind will be in the way to understand the Scriptures better than he could by the Scriptures alone.

There are, moreover, peculiar circumstances which constitute the material world a fit source of instruction: for instance, the universality of its lessons. Infidels say that our revelation meets the ear of only a small part of the world, but that if it were from heaven it would be universal. Time and means must effect a refutation of this objection, such as God will eventually provide; but against the works of nature no such argument can be advanced, for they are of universal application, and every human being that has eyes and ears, with any share of observation and reflection, has the benefit here of an instructor. That they are not better instructed than what appears is owing to the same causes which leave men in a state of ignorance in England—a wicked and untractable nature. The works of God have a language every where intelligible. "There is no speech nor language where

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their voice is not heard:" Ps. xix. "To saint, to savage, and to sage," God speaks in his works; and by the productions of the earth, or by the elements surrounding them, he excites to fear and to hope, and that in many instances with a voice which the noise of their idolatries cannot overpower, and which the delusions of their priests cannot silence; and when this language of nature strikes in with that innate consciousness which possesses every human heart, this universal teaching may, in very many instances, be to a certain degree salutary. This is a proof of God's universal benevolence, and that to such a degree as, St. Paul says, will leave the heathen "without excuse."

As the material creation was admirably fitted, by its universality, to teach all nations; so it had this further adaptation, that it was ever unchangeable in its general character. So steady have been the operation of the laws of nature that Stoics have considered every thing as proceeding in one regular course by an inevitable necessity; and infidels of modern date have claimed this as an argument against Scripture miracles—the fallacy of which, however, Mr. Campbell has very ably exposed—yet these testimonies, added to historical records and our own observation, establish the point that nature is always the same (miracles excepted), and is therefore a steady instructor. As the "word of God abideth for ever;" as God in all his glorious attributes and perfections, in his determinations and counsels, changes not; so nature, throughout her works, is the same in the thousands of years that are past, and shall remain the same till time shall end. Though kingdoms rise and fall; though some stars, as astronomers tell us, lose their places; though the sentiments of men may undergo a thousand revolutions, yet the material creation, and its endless objects of instruction, are always the same, and the references to natural things that are made for our benefit in the Scriptures lose nothing of their pristine authority by the lapse of thousands of years.

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These references, whether made by David or the prophets, or our blessed Lord himself, are now as well understood as they were at first; while the changes which have taken place in the manners of nations have been so great that at the present time we can ill understand the history of antiquity. The unchangeable nature, therefore, of the visible objects that afford instruction, particularly fits them for their office. It is this by which they stand recommended to us even upon the very same ground as the immutability of the written word.

The works of nature are not only adapted to the purpose of instruction by their universality, and by their unchangeable nature, but also by their adaptation to the lowest capacities of men. A mathematical demonstration is a demonstration only to a mathematician, and a learned demonstration requires the learning of the learned to perceive it. Greek can be understood by a Grecian scholar. Sublime things may be comprehended by elevated minds, and deep mysteries and doctrines may be quite intelligible to divines and their polite hearers. In all these cases, however, the multitude are left out; but the works of God, like all the essentials of Scripture, are of a character adapted to the capacities of the many; and I am convinced, by this coincidence, that both are from God, who has as much regard to the poor, to the multitude, the great mass of mankind, as to the learned and the wise; and when I consider that the lessons of nature and those of the divine Scripture, with the teachings of the Holy Spirit superadded, all teach the same thing, speak the same language to man's heart, and point man to the same objects, to be pursued by the same course, I am forced to exclaim, This is the finger of God! Such coincidences could never have happened but that an intelligent, wise, and good Being, having in view the instruction of ignorant, erring, lost man, ordered these things in his unerring counsels; and whatever regard God had to his own glory, which

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must ever be the first object, yet has he been mindful of us.

This representation of things may not, however, fully satisfy those who plead for the exclusive sufficiency of the written word, without the aid of nature. There is something highly commendable in a zeal for the sufficiency of the Scriptures in an age like this, when Scripture is depreciated, if not in plain words, yet by implication; and I am sensible that these Scriptures are able to make a man wise unto salvation, and thoroughly furnished to all good works. But this, with our believing and beloved friends, is not the present point, which alone is, whether or not the natural things of creation continue to afford materials of instruction to man. The opinion that the instructions of nature are no longer required appears to be founded upon a notion like this, that the morning-star is now no longer necessary since the great light of heaven shines upon us, or that some sort of supersedeas has issued to stay the proceedings of all natural religion, or, as some people say, as the law of Moses is abrogated by the hope of the gospel, so is the law of nature. Now this is a very short way of escaping all inquiry; but I submit that whatever was once thought necessary to the instruction of man remains still, and will ever be, necessary in some degree, and more especially to some part of mankind. True religion is always the same under every economy, and the avenues to it are the good old paths. That its paths may be made plainer, and that more light may be shed on them by succeeding times, I am ready to admit; but that one path is stopped up by hedge or ditch since the creation of the world, I must beg leave to deny. This, however, will appear more clearly by considering what the most ancient religion was; what it appeared to be in different subsequent dates; and what it is at the present day. Defaced as the image of God was by the fall, yet man remained a reasonable and conscious being, and consequently an ac-

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countable agent. The visible creation was before the eye of man. He could not but make reflections upon what he saw. Nature was not so corrupt but man must believe and acknowledge the divine nature and existence: nothing could make itself. The broad lines of excellency every where seen must impress his mind with some notion of the divine wisdom; for this is the unavoidable inference of the view presented to him. It must appear right to him—his reason and conscience must dictate—that this Divine Being deserved suitable affections from him, and that the want of such affections must be a great fault; and he must feel within him a moral sense of right and wrong with respect to his Maker. He must observe how admirably every thing above his head, and every thing here below, did silently obey its Maker. He must also feel his situation in respect to his fellow-creatures to be such that some relative law required observance, and could not be disobeyed with impunity, as in the case of Cain and of Lamech; and, besides mere obligation, that his fellow-creature was entitled to his love and affection: for it is only by progressive degradations that this principle can be extinguished. Both in respect to his Maker and his fellow-creatures, it was plain to him that God had commenced his legislative authority, by the inward feelings of conscience as well as by outward demonstrations; it was plain that God in his providence, in his sovereign direction of cause and effect, did actually make a difference between the righteous and the wicked (Gen. iv. 7), and that this legislation would proceed beyond the bounds of the present life. In this stage of civil society, or individual existence, it must have been evident, on inspection of the heavenly bodies, and of the bounteous earth, the clouds of rain, and springs of water, that God was supremely good: nay, further, by the beauty and variety of many created things, such as met and delighted the senses, it must have been evident that God was indulgent also. The rich clothing of the earth



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by day—the beauty of the bespangled heavens at night—the rising and setting sun, scattering infinite varieties of colours and forms over the light clouds that seemed to delight in receiving these impressions—the fanning breeze and the shady groves, all combined to gratify and delight the beholder; while delicious fruits gave taste its pleasure, and the ear was delighted by concords of sweet sounds. Æolian melody so ravished the ear of Jubal that he invented the harp and the organ, instruments to produce those sounds at will. Whether or not Jubal's lyre or harp, and organ, were first dedicated to God, does not appear from history; but it is extremely probable that they were tuned to the expressions of gratitude and praise to him.

That the wickedness of man may do all kinds of violence to this natural religion is awfully true; but it must be acknowledged that this equally holds good as to any other form of religion. Man may degenerate into a form worse than brutish; but still I contend that every part of my representation is such as might have existed: and that it was such as the Sovereign Ruler of the world did look for is most certain; for the condemnation of the flood was not inflicted because these antediluvians refused Moses or Christ, but because "every thought and imagination of man's heart was evil, only evil, and that continually." And man's wickedness was perpetrated in the midst of the light of nature that surrounded him: and his transgressions had this mark of infamy upon them.

But, it may be asked, had man no other light in the antediluvian ages than what nature afforded? Yes, certainly. The early institution of sacrifices was a species of instruction which applied itself in a way of comfort to that sense of guilt which every man acquainted with himself must feel. He was here taught that God might be propitiated—that there was forgiveness with him that he might be feared—that God's character was mercy, or these sacrifices

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were appointed in vain. As to what was peculiar to those sacrifices, and in what they might at some future period terminate, he might be involved in much obscurity; though faith might penetrate this gloom, as in the case of Abel, Heb. xi. 4, yet here was substantively the first light of the gospel. The first institution of the sabbath was given to these ages; and holy men of God, Abel, Seth, Enoch, and Noah, were patterns of the true religion, and such patterns in their "walk with God," as it were well if we in the nineteenth century of the Christian era could closely follow. Enoch and Noah were preachers of righteousness, and their holy example was a sweet savour to God and men: and this was not without effect; for a church was formed, and its members were distinguished as the "sons of God." So that "God did not leave himself without a witness" in this remotest period of his legislative sovereignty.

Nay, I contend that there has not, cannot be any change in that which constituted then the essence of true religion, or only a change of blessed improvement, as the earliest dawn of the morning is improved by the advance of day, while the light itself as to its nature is materially the same. The first elements of religion were wisely contrived for such a creature as man actually is, and while man is man he must continue to be dealt with in a manner precisely the same.*

* "The nature of man being the same now as from the beginning of the world, and the nature of God being unchangeable, it must follow that the great objects of the dispensations of God to man must be the same in every age, though the form and the manner after which that object is pursued may be different. So that 'what God spake in former times to the fathers by the prophets,' will be found the same, in sense and effect, with what he 'spoke in the last days by his Son,' 'though he spake in divers manners,' as occasions might require, at 'sundry times;' and this is a matter of the utmost consequence to be observed: and hence Paul spake of the gospel being preached in the wilderness, as well as after our Lord's advent and ascension. The law and the gospel have the same name, and are distinguished by the same character. So that the religion of the people of God was the same for substance under the Old as under the New Testament: we find one true religion from the beginning of the world to its end." *Jones of Nayland.*

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My point is this, that man was created a religious being, that in the fall this character was not absolutely and entirely changed, that God left with man the volume of universal nature to read for his instruction, and that he graciously superadded such revelations as were necessary to instruct him in those things which nature alone could not lead him to comprehend.

Religion after the flood would necessarily be the same as before it occurred. It certainly acquired new sanctions by the awful visitation of an almost universal destruction. Noah had witnessed a populated and a destroyed world—a world, once beautiful, utterly transformed and wasted. The solemnity of that scene, and his miraculous escape, were well calculated to prepare his mind for that sacrifice which was his first act after he descended from the ark. We see in him the grand patriarch of the new world; its only ruler, its first priest, its "preacher of righteousness." Faithful to his charge, he did not meditate a new theology, though his unworthy posterity did so; like Paul, that which he received, that he handed over to his sons and successors. That he did not innovate in religion is presumptively evident; for if such had been the fact, the pen of Moses would diligently have noted it.

Proceeding further, we find Abram, without any special command, or any notion of his own, "built altars to the Lord" in the manner of Noah. In both cases, and in succeeding ages, the true religion survived the convulsions of nature. The earth, though transformed, resumed its vegetative powers. The animal tribes passed into their kinds and species to accompany a re-peopled world, capable with the unchanging heavens of leading man "from nature up to nature's God." Every assistance in the way of instruction to man remained; and had not the deep-rooted depravity of man corrupted this religion, idolatry and all its hideous concomitants had not so soon have overspread the earth. Had the example of Noah, of Abraham,

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and of his family been followed, the generation of those ages, as they spread themselves over the earth, had spread the knowledge of the true God; and with the resurrection of the vegetable kingdom after the flood, "righteousness also might have sprung out of the earth." To that time, I say, no novelty in religion obtained; and though degeneracy was so rapid, yet we have undoubted evidence that the voice of nature could yet be heard; that consciousness of right and wrong could not be lost; that in every succeeding age an acknowledgment was made that there was a supreme Being above all the vanities of the Gentiles.

If a time had ever arrived for the introduction of a new religion, it was in the time of Moses, to whom "God spake face to face, and mouth to mouth." But while we admit that the economy of the Mosaic law was very great and important, yet we ask of what did it consist? The determination of Jehovah to form a people for himself; a clear exposition of the law of creation; a complete ritual respecting those sacrifices which the patriarchs had somewhat irregularly observed; a clearer discovery of the Messiah, to whom all sacrifices and types pointed: in short, a ritual that answered the end of the gospel, and pointed to the Lamb of God that should come into the world. Here was indeed a new light, but no new religion. The religion of nature was to continue, but with special cautions against certain abuses: they were admonished to remember that when they saw the sun, the moon, and stars, these were not to be worshipped; when they looked to the wisest among the creatures, they were not to make from them any likeness of the Deity:—now these very interdictions show the existence of a natural religion, and are an acknowledgment of its being; only the creature was not to be placed instead of the Creator.

From this time and throughout the prophetic ages, when instruction to man assumed a regular form, and was enriched with promises and prophecies of future good, the

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language in which those instructions were conveyed was in a great degree derived from the natural world as well as from the written law, from which it appears that the natural world could not then be dispensed with as an instructor.

Passing on to the opening of the gospel dispensation, do we here find any diminution of references to the volume of nature? The conduct of our blessed Lord himself fully answers this question. He gave his sanction to the method of instruction which his prophets in every age had used so successfully. He laid every object of nature under contribution, and from things natural led his disciples to things spiritual. He compared himself to the sun, the light of the world; his word of truth, to seed cast into the earth; the resurrection of the seed to the appearance of grace in the heart; heavenly wisdom to the pearl of great price, &c. His parables were made up of such resemblances, and without a parable spake he not unto the people. In the apostolic epistles allusions are more generally made to the language of the law and the prophets, and references to nature occur less frequently, though sufficient still to show that there was no abandonment of the system. This continuance of the language of nature and that of the law in the New Testament, is an evident proof that neither the one nor the other was become useless. The law did not abrogate the religion of nature, nor did the gospel abrogate either the one or the other, but shed a new and glorious light upon both. As Dr. Jortin has observed: "Nature instructs us in all her parts. Every creature conveys some useful doctrine. We may learn constancy from the sun, moon, and stars, which keep their appointed course. We may learn honesty and gratitude from the earth, which faithfully preserves what is committed to her care, and repays our labour with interest. We may learn industry from the animals who provide against hunger, change of seasons, and the assaults of enemies. We may learn obedience and obligation from the domestic creatures who love

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their master, and serve him in their respective character." *Jortin's Sermon* on Luke xvi. 8.

The gospel of Christ is the very highest illustration of divine benevolence; and all the pains we can take to render it familiar to the understandings of the ignorant, by comparisons drawn from such objects as come within the cognizance of the senses, will not be considered unnecessary. In order therefore to lead you into this study, I shall here add a few brief illustrations, which may serve to show *how* the works of God may be compared with the word of God. I begin with,

1. The image of *light*.* Light is that fine and subtle matter, universally diffused, that strikes our eyes. The natural sun is the source of this light; it was the first perfect visible creature. "God said, Let there be light:" Gen. i. 3. It discovers all the beauty of the world, quickens the motions of nature: it is commonly made the emblem of joy, as darkness is the emblem of sorrow. What would the world be without this blessing? We cannot conceive of the loss of it by the case of a person that is blind, because the blind receive great benefit from the eyes of others. The best image of darkness, the opposite of the blessing we are speaking of, is seen in the state of the Egyptians, who were three days without the sun: Exod. x. 21—23. Darkness is emphatically employed to represent what is gloomy and appalling; and what can be more natural than to compare the light of day with that spiritual knowledge of which Christ himself is the source? John viii. 12. The apostle does so compare them, 2 Cor. iv. 6: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The allusions of Scripture to this point are

* Vide Dr. Hunter on Light.

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very numerous; and, in your speaking to the people, what an easy opening is this to the nature of the gospel! how often will this give an illustration that cannot be misunderstood!

2. Compare the church of God to the *moon*, &c. Her light is borrowed, imperfect, variable, inconstant, spotted with corruptions. From Jesus the church receives all her light of inspiration, ordinances, and grace. Amidst various changes of outward circumstances, amid numberless spots and imperfections, she, during the night of time, communicates the light of life to our darkened earth. The righteous also shall shine as stars for ever and ever. Ministers are compared to stars: Rev. i. 20. Christians, children of light, hold forth their light to the world, as stars do.

3. The *air* is that thin, dilatable, and compressible body in which we breathe, and which surrounds the earth to a great height. We could not live a moment without air: the action of the lungs administers it to the body, and, as a means, it is by this we "live, and move, and have our being." That the air may be preserved in a proper state to support life, it is not stagnant, but is put in motion by the wind, which in fact is nothing else but air in motion: but what propels it forward, or pushes it in this or that direction, no philosopher can tell; such is its mystery that it mocks the wise man of the world as it passes by him: John iii. 8. This element, like light, is an admirable means of instruction, no doubt ordained to a spiritual as well as a natural use; it is, I apprehend, impossible to think otherwise. Neither of these can be supposed accidental resemblances. "In the air," says Mr. Jones, "we have a figure of the Holy Spirit, which worketh imperceptibly as it listeth, while we cannot tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth. As air is necessary to natural life, the operations of the Divine Spirit are necessary to the spiritual life. As the air gives the breath of speech, so the

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Holy Ghost gives the utterance of inspiration as on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit came upon the disciples like a rushing mighty wind, &c."

4. *Water* and *fire* are equally to be found comparable to spiritual objects; both are applied as emblems of purification, and water is also employed to signify that which refreshes and comforts. Divine grace is emphatically called living water, as that water is which is taken from a spring, because it brings with it new life and spirit, which it has derived from the subterraneous chemistry of nature, and which is always found to contain a large quantity of air. The element of water which washes and purifies the body, is used to signify the inward cleansing of the soul from sin by the washing of regeneration; and all the purifications by water under the law had a like meaning, as applied in those words of the prophet: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." This new heart and new spirit, as the work of God's grace, was always signified by every act of religious purification, according to that of the psalmist: "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

5. The *earth*, that solid mass of matter which has in itself the necessary powers of vegetation, is by our Lord likened to the heart, the good ground which brings some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred fold. The renewed soul, so to speak, has its vegetative qualities, and brings forth fruit unto God; while it has its contrast in the wicked, unrenewed heart, which brings forth briars, thorns, thistles, &c., only fit to be burned.

6. Next to these the *clouds* of the lower heavens, the *rain* and *dew*, all have their likenesses in the benign king-

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dom of grace, and, as well as some other products of the air, are as clearly referred to in Scripture as such.

7. To inspire holy fear, thunders, lightnings, storms, and tempests, are images of divine anger, and are admirably adapted to a popular discourse.

8. The various products of the earth—as woods, trees, shrubs, corn, seeds, flowers—have spiritual resemblances assigned them in Scripture.

9. The various tribes of birds and animals, some bearing resemblances to the saints, some to the wicked, and that of various kinds: to which may be added the reptile class; and here we have reason to remember the serpent. There are also the flying and crawling insects, and the tenants of the watery element: most of these receive notice of one kind or another in God's book.

10. The human body is compared to the church of Christ, 1 Cor. xii.; and distinct parts of the body represent spiritual acts. Man's food, of various sorts, is spiritualized, and also the liquid elements that contribute to his sustenance; his various movements, actions, and motions; the faculties of the senses, appetites, and passions; his habits; his occupations; his constitutional state as to health and sickness; his enjoyments and his diseases; every thing that happens to him from his birth to his grave—his times and seasons, his relationships and dependencies, his civil, his political, his religious, his commercial, his social character, as an inhabitant of earth and as an expectant of heaven—admit of comparisons as entertaining as they are instructive.

11. It has been said that even doctrines of the highest class might be learnt from visible nature; allow me to add that man's eating of the *flesh of animals*, to which we are so reconciled that we scarcely give it a thought, exposes to our view the similitudes of "the derivation of a principle of spiritual life by the death of Christ, and the remission of sin

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by the shedding of his innocent blood, which are doctrines essential to the gospel, and every way agreeable to the condition of man's natural life; for we live by the death of innocent animals, which are compelled, without any fault of their own, to lay down their lives for our sustenance. Thus thoughtless men exercise a practice without understanding it, as Caiaphas prophesied without knowing what he said: 'It is expedient that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not:' John xi. 50. It is expedient that the innocent should die to feed our bodies—let any man deny it if he can; and it is equally expedient that Jesus Christ should die to feed our souls. The animals before referred to are no doubt doomed to die by the wise appointment of God; as Jesus Christ the righteous, with the meekness and innocency of the lamb, was brought to the slaughter, that through his death we might have eternal life."*

12. I shall lastly advert to that light which nature sheds on another and the last doctrine that man is called on to believe. "Some animals after a torpid state, scarcely distinguishable from death, recover the power of life at the proper season by the influence of the sun; some after submersion in water during the whole winter. Some crawl for a time as helpless worms upon the earth, like ourselves; then they retire into a covering, which answers the end of a coffin or a sepulchre, where they are invisibly transformed and come forth in the proper season in glorious array, with wings and painted plumes, more like the inhabitants of heaven than such worms as they were in their earthly state. This transformation is so striking and pleasant an emblem of the present, the intermediate, and the glorified state of man, that people of the most remote antiquity, when they buried their dead, embalmed and inclosed them in an artificial covering, so figured and painted as to

* Jones, p. 334—336.

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resemble the caterpillar or silkworm in the intermediate state:" and when renovation is to be insisted on from the works of nature, we can refer safely to St. Paul's critical observations on a grain of wheat (1 Cor. xv.), which seems to perish, but which in due season springs up to life. Do not these things contain matters that may well throw light on the glorious doctrine of the resurrection? and surely God, who made man at the first of the dust of the earth, can form him afresh from the same material.

The objects of comparison thus briefly set before you may be sufficient to give impulse to your thoughts, and to excite you to pursue the subject, not as philosophers but as divines; and I recommend you to cherish this study for the enlargement of your own minds in the knowledge of nature and the word of God. In the course of your study ideas may present themselves in two ways: by beginning with the works of nature, and then rising to the spiritual and scriptural sense; or commencing with any scriptural allusion to the objects of nature in the course of your reading, and then descending to the thing pointed out.

Leaving it undetermined how far the ancient world were able to derive spiritual ideas from natural things, yet now that the key is presented to us by the Scriptures, we should surely be unpardonable if we did not avail ourselves of it; and to what extent this Topic may with propriety be pursued it is impossible to say. In general it may be observed that the whole volume of nature is available, and that by the several particular objects presented to our notice an easy ascent is afforded

"From nature up to nature's God,"

and to the several truths he desires us to know, and wherein we shall find part and counterpart more aptly indented than is generally supposed. While however the book of nature lies open before you, and invites your attention, the

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word of God must be the chief object of your study; and it will be of great advantage to collect all the natural objects presented under different aspects in the Scriptures, and to form a little system for yourself: indeed this would be worthy of some able pen.

In closing my remarks on this Topic, allow me to observe that the act of comparing one thing with another is of considerable importance in every branch of study; by this means truth is elicited, and by this means also is truth elucidated. When about to compose any discourse, you must first examine carefully and diligently what your text contains independently of all human helps, though after this operation you may take the benefit of such assistances as you possess. After you have ascertained and collected the principal ideas, "the seeds of things," but before you have formed your divisions, submit your work, thus far done, to comparison. Compare your ideas with the context, with parallel passages, with the analogy of faith, &c. By these comparisons you will discover whether your thoughts are deficient, or unsuitable, or redundant, and especially whether you have started any eccentric idea, such as would expose you to animadversion; for I think young speakers are somewhat liable by a sanguine turn of mind to commit mistakes here: you will then compare such ideas as are to stand for the discourse one with another. By this comparison of the ideas among themselves you will see into what different classes they may be arranged; and, having thus fixed upon your general divisions, you will proceed again to compare these selected ideas among themselves in order to place them to advantage in subdivisions. When you have thus far assorted and arranged your ideas, you will recur to the chief point you had in view in fixing on your text, and endeavour to bring all your thoughts to bear upon this principal point. These rules, with a sound and vigorous judgment, will enable you to produce a truly

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original sermon, suited to those extraordinary occasions which will sometimes occur.

We may further observe that comparing of things assimilates to reasoning upon things; and though we are occupied in the study and diffusion of revelation, yet with reason we have something to do, or how can "we put to proof the things that differ?"* How compare a false position with a true one that directs itself against it? St. Paul says, "Judge ye what I say;" by which he intimates that what he had been stating was reasonable, or it could not have been referred to the decision of a sound understanding. Again: Paul before Felix "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come;" and so forcible and convincing was his reasoning that the tyrant, whose frown was sufficient to strike terror into the hearts of his subjects, now trembled under an appalling consciousness of guilt. It is true that human reasoning is capable of perversion, and sometimes makes "the worse appear the better cause;" at least to carnal minds, who greedily adopt the sophistries of those who lie in wait to deceive. While, however, reasoning is abused by many, and feared by a few who have perceived that abuse and the mischief it has done, still it has its uses and rules, which are not to be neglected or shunned by a preacher of the gospel. "When the gospel gains admittance into the human mind, it is far from superseding the use of the reasoning faculty; but rather, by enlarging the bounds of the Christian's knowledge, provides it with a new province, wherein it may exercise itself with greater certainty and delight. It affirms in the strongest manner all the declarations of God, all the reason of duty naturally imprinted on his conscience; and adds to them what was entirely wanting before—a divine 'reason of hope.' The strictest reasoner can have no valid objection against the gospel, unless he *will* quarrel with

* See Dr. A. Clarke and Macknight on Phil. i. 10.

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it: it provides a sinner with a source of comfort, without the aid of his reasoning faculties, where all his natural funds for reasoning proved utterly insufficient."—*Jones's Bib. Cyclo.*, vol. ii.

Not so finely expressed, but closer to the point, is Mr. Caryl: "Reason is that ground or soil which, being tilled and dressed, manured and well wrought upon, brings forth those excellent fruits of wisdom which ennobles the mind of man."—Vol. ii., p. 258.

The several gradations or links of intellect discernible between the idiot and the wisest man in the world, will be seen in the powers and exercises of reason as they are respectively possessed and used. Even reason shows us the vast superiority of the wisdom of worldlings over the children of light. The comparison and the reasoning following upon it is thus stated by Jortin: "The children of this world have continual regard to the end they pursue. They never lose sight of it, let it be wealth, or power, or honour, or pleasure. It is their constant object, their earliest and latest thoughts; it rises and lies down with them, it goes out and returns home with them.

"But God's children are seldom so intent on their concerns. Sometimes they forget it, sometimes do things contrary to it; often they are busy in affairs that have no relation to it. They are rather good by fits and starts than with uniform and consistent perseverance.

"The children of this world are wise in choosing proper means to obtain their end. If they happen to be insufficient they change them, choose others, and, like the diligent spider whose net is broken, begin the work again. Christians are seldom equally judicious. They sometimes trust to deceitful hopes, adopt imperfect expedients, rely too much on zeal for opinions.

"The children of this world are diligent in their pursuits; seldom is a Christian so assiduous in attending on grace.

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"The children of this world are constant and resolute; they are not dejected by difficulty, discouraged by refusal, tired by labour, seduced by flattery, prevailed on by importunity, bribed by reward, persuaded by eloquence, daunted by threats, put out of countenance by ridicule, or overborne by clamour, to abandon their pursuits. But the good are in danger of being overpowered by every discouragement, every stratagem, every obstacle, that works on their hopes or fears, or their inclination."—*Jortin's Sermon* on Luke xvi. 8.

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# LECTURE XXI.

## TOPIC XVII.

### REMARK THE DIFFERENCES OF WORDS AND ACTIONS ON DIFFERENT OCCASIONS.

When a weak scrupulosity or a tenderness of conscience was in question, which put some of the faithful upon eating only herbs, St. Paul exhorted the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak: "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth; for God hath received him;" Rom. xiv. 3. But when the same St. Paul speaks of false teachers, who wanted to impose a yoke on conscience, and who, under pretext of meats and days, were attempting to join Moses with Jesus Christ, as if Christians were yet obliged to observe the ceremonial law, then the apostle has no patience with them, but condemns and anathematizes them as people who preached another gospel, and exhorts the faithful to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage;" Gal. v. 1.

So again, when you find in the gospel that Jesus Christ sometimes forbade his disciples to publish the miracles that he wrought and to declare his divinity, and at other times that he ordered them to publish upon the *house-tops* what they had *heard in private*, and to preach to *all nations* the mysteries of his kingdom, you must remark that this difference is owing to different occasions. While Jesus Christ was



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upon earth, the mysteries of his kingdom were covered with the veil of his humiliation, it being necessary in some sense to conceal them; but after his exaltation, it became proper to publish them to the whole earth.

The same diversity may be remarked in what the Lord Jesus said to the Canaanitish woman, that he was "only sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and that it was "not meet to give the children's bread to dogs." This seems contrary to an almost infinite number of passages of Scripture which affirm, Jesus Christ is "the light of the Gentiles—to him shall the gathering of the people be." These and all other such passages will perfectly agree if you distinguish time and occasion. While Jesus Christ was upon earth, he was the minister of the circumcision; but when he departed to glory, he became the Mediator of all men.

Whatever falls under the idea of *similarity*, whether in a more general or more minute degree, belongs to the Topic which has been just considered. We now turn to the consideration of *dissimilarities*; and as we are required to compare one part of Scripture with another in order to discover such dissimilarities, much that is said on the subject of comparison generally will apply to the present Topic, and it will not therefore be necessary to extend our present remarks to any great length. The specific province of the Topic, as appears from its title, is the elucidation of discrepances by a reference to different occasions and circumstances, which do actually govern and compel different words and actions, and of which, therefore, it is both our duty and wisdom to take due notice.

Differences certainly do appear; what is the reason? Because there is a difference of occasions and circumstances. The right way of noticing these differences themselves is to begin with the first in order, and to proceed to the last, and then show that some new occasion and circumstance has

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created a necessary difference. Mr. Robinson observes, in reference to this Topic, "seeming differences in Scripture are reconciled by showing that on different occasions it was proper to say and unsay, to allow and disallow, to establish an economy and to dissolve it. The prophet Samuel reasoned with the Jews on this principle concerning the righteous acts of the Lord to them and their fathers: 1 Sam. xii. 6—15. According to him kings, priests, prophets, ordinances, establishments, captivities, all were appointed for the producing moral rectitude or obedience; and for the production of this, different treatments were necessary on different occasions." There is a change of administration but not of purpose. Jehovah commanded a certain course of daily sacrifices to be offered under the law; yet by his prophets he declares his abhorrence of them because abused and perverted from their proper end. God did not allow any but the priests to eat the show-bread, and yet permitted David and his followers to do so under particular circumstances. The brazen serpent was to be preserved as a memorial in the holy place, and yet for good reasons Hezekiah in God's behalf brake it in pieces. Circumcision was strictly enjoined; yet in the wilderness for forty years it was dispensed with. None were by the law allowed to eat of the sacrifices without the ceremony of purification; but under the existing circumstances in the time of king Hezekiah, this ceremonial cleansing was not enforced; 2 Chron. xxx. 18. Again: "The Bible contains a record of the laws by which God's kingdom has been governed under various circumstances. In the patriarchal state one code of laws was necessary, under the Mosaic dispensation another, and afterwards under the gospel a third, differing circumstantially from both the former;" and it would seem, from the language of prophecy, that a fourth state of the church is yet to come, in which there will be such an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit as to supersede the ordinary ministration of the



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gospel: "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest;" Jer. xxxi. 34.

If we pass from the Old to the New Testament, we shall meet with similar diversities. Christ revokes some Old Testament records (Matt. v.), and adds new weight and importance to moral precepts. Our Lord's speech to his disciples differed materially at different times, and he uttered things "as they were able to bear them." At one time he forbade his disciples to publish his miracles or to avow his divinity, and at other times he ordered them to publish upon the house-top what they had heard in private. On one occasion he restricts the publication of the gospel "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and cautions his disciples "not to enter into any city of the Samaritans;" on another he commands them to carry the gospel of salvation into all kingdoms; Mark xvi. 15.

In the apostolic epistles we find many like instances: thus St. Paul strenuously insists on justification by faith alone; and James declares that "a man is justified by works, and not by faith only," which we have explained in the former volume of these Lectures, p. 489. In some epistles we find the peculiar doctrines of the gospel rather referred to as matters beyond dispute than fully stated and pressed on the people; in others they are defended with great vehemence, and those who opposed them are anathematized. Different occasions demanded this different mode of address. When no opposition was made to these doctrines by the professors of Christianity, it was unnecessary to employ argument in their defence; but when the Jewish teachers and Gnostics obstructed the truths of the gospel, it became necessary to guard the Christian church from the influence of such teachers, and to expose their sophistries. In all these cases a change in words and actions is called for, and such change is regulated by occasions and circum-

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stances. For similar reasons our statute books receive the accession of new articles, while many of the old ones become obsolete and a dead letter. New municipal regulations are demanded by some new disorders, &c. On the same principle parents are obliged to resort to new measures to preserve family decorum; and I assume that ministers and teachers stand in a similar predicament. A heavy charge rests upon them; they stand in the capacity of rulers in Christ's name, and great responsibility attaches to their office. St. Paul intimates this when, addressing the people, he says, "Obey them that have the rule over you;" Heb. xiii. 17. Indeed, if a minister has no authority, he can have no responsibility; and if he has no responsibility, he can have no office; and there is an end of the whole affair at once. Some persons may think that the greatest share of responsibility ought to rest in the deacons and members; but the apostle Paul certainly did not intend these by the "rulers over the people;" for the words are, "Obey them that have the rule over you, who *speak* to you in the name of the Lord." When ministers surrender any part of their office, I do not think it an act of any merit to themselves, or conducive to the real advantage of the people. Perhaps these sentiments are gratuitous; perhaps ministers know their office sufficiently. However, it will be agreed on all hands that, in the exercise of ministerial authority and ministerial address, many things must be said, or done, or omitted, according to circumstances; that what is proper at one time may be highly improper at another. So long as different occasions occur, which no ordinary foresight can anticipate, different conduct and varied address must be resorted to by the Christian teacher. This could not fail to be noticed by discerning minds, and it has occasioned their just remarks. Mr. Howe, on Luke xix. 41, 42, says, "What are the things which belong to the peace of a people living under the gospel? The things belonging to a people's peace are not throughout

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the same with all. Living or not living under the gospel makes a considerable difference in the matter. Before the incarnation and public appearance of our Lord, something was not necessary among the Jews that afterwards became necessary. It was sufficient for them before to believe, more indefinitely, in a Messiah to come; afterwards he plainly tells them, 'If ye believe not that *I am he*, ye shall die in your sins;' John viii. 24. Believing in Christ cannot be necessary, *as a duty*, to pagans who never heard of him, however necessary it may be as a means of their salvation. Their not believing in him cannot be itself a sin, though by it they should want a remedy for their other sins; but the case is very different with regard to us," &c.

I beg leave to observe, further, that there will sometimes be a necessity of acting or speaking in some new way, as new circumstances occur, or reformations are not to be looked for, and the order and purity of Christian communities are not likely to be preserved. Occasions are frequently occurring to call for firmness, and much wisdom is necessary to direct that firmness. By wisdom, however, I do not mean that crafty wisdom which priests employ to enslave the people; nor that boisterous overbearing wisdom that deafens the voice of reason; nor a tame unmeaning wisdom; nor a fearful and timorous wisdom; but "the wisdom which cometh from above," so beautifully described by James, iii. 17: just such wisdom as St. Paul manifested on all occasions—the wisdom of the serpent united with the harmlessness of the dove. Painful as it may be, timely interference must be made. Nehemiah had a very painful duty to perform on a certain well-known occasion; yet he flinched not from it, and he thereby saved the declining interest of religion from a fatal lapse and certain ruin: want of courage in moments of difficulty is the very worst fault that can lie against a minister of religion. On the other hand, I am willing to allow that the necessity

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referred to must be apparent, indubitable, and imperious; perpetual intermeddling rather weakens than strengthens authority, and ultimately defeats the purpose which it seeks to promote. Now here we must go by Scripture instances of such real necessity, and these will, in some respects, guide our judgment. Observe the manner and suitable matter of Paul's address to Peter, when he practised some dissimulation at Antioch; Gal. ii. What! in the infancy of the church, must Jesuitism be charged upon one bearing the apostolic name? shall the vilest leprosy appear among holy brethren? or shall cowardice disgrace the character of Christ's ambassador? No: rather than these things should occur, Peter must be "withstood to the face;" and no doubt Peter was afterwards very thankful for this timely rebuke, by which the church was saved from dishonour.

Again: there was a time when the Galatians were so attached to Paul that they would have "plucked out their own eyes to give them to him;" but when a corrupted gospel invaded this church, and it became a question whether the pure or the spurious should stand, see with what spirit and with what wisdom too St. Paul acted: his love, his zeal, his holy jealousy gathered round his heart, and gave utterance to an epistle well calculated to produce compunction for their folly, and to restore order, peace, and love. On another occasion, when danger threatened the Corinthian church, with what a determined but tempered address Paul undertook the work of reformation. This was, as is well known, a mixed church: some had great merit, these he highly commended; some were wicked, these he threatened; and one he directed to be excommunicated, but afterwards, on his repentance, recommended a restoration; some were given to a party spirit, these he cautions and instructs; some abused the ordinance of the Supper, to these he gave a timely check. In short, he adopted his own rule given to the ministers of Thessalonica; he "warned the unruly," those bolder spirits that

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are impatient of all restraint, and who, the better to carry their purpose, endeavour to confederate others with them.

Now if we attend to the *spirit* of this Topic, and the hints suggested by it to our reflection, we shall be directed to the discreet and prudent conduct of a spiritual father, exercising that sound and healthy judgment which ever ought to pervade the ministerial character. The irresponsible individual has no such part to act; his own conduct is his only care; and it had been well for some to have been so placed in the world. The mere preacher has but little to do with that wisdom to which we now refer; when his sermons are provided and delivered, his work is done. He is one of those beautiful and melodious creatures that every body admires, but with whom no wise man is satisfied, and whom no wise congregation would choose for a regular pastor. He may please in the pulpit and the drawing-room: his cultivated mind, his fine taste, his ready wit and richness in anecdote, are qualities which cannot fail to give him an attractive influence. Besides, he cannot so break the rules of good breeding as to speak unpleasant things. With the sins and the follies of individuals he has no concern; indeed, he feels that he has no talent to manage them; and perhaps in this he is perfectly right—an office of difficulty must fall into better hands. But the true father of a spiritual family loses his individual character, and becomes in his speech, and in his conduct, and even in the expressions of his countenance, just what circumstances require of him, just what parental duty and rising occurrences urge upon him. He stands in Christ's stead in every thing. He enters fully into the spirit of his office; his private feelings are placed in subjection or neutrality. With other ministers, and perhaps much in the same manner, "he preaches the word." He labours in season, but he has also some things to do as it were out of season: that is, when his public service is ended; and then, if needs be, he reproves, rebukes, exhorts with all

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long-suffering, as often as new circumstances call for it; and this he does that the parties may be "sound in the faith." In the exercise of that faithfulness and vigilance which his pastoral office demands, he uses entreaties, and addresses the objects of his care as "his little children;" Gal. iv. Endearments the most tender will be mingled with his severest rebukes; so that his love, his anxiety for the welfare of the party, can never justly be doubted. His courage and firmness will be balanced with the "meekness and gentleness of Christ." There was no want of courage, faithfulness, and decision in the friends of Job, but they wanted the tenderness and fellow-feeling which his case required: they consequently added weight to his affliction, and forced him to cry out, "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O my friends;" Job xix. 21. We are not to "break the bruised reed," not to "destroy, but to save."

In acknowledging the difficulties of the work to which this Topic and subject applies, it would be some consolation if any rules could be laid down for the guidance of those who desire to acquit themselves as good stewards of the divine word. But if the occurrence itself cannot dictate the proper course or expedient; if it defies your keenest penetration, I recommend the study of *precedents*. Some of these have been named in this Lecture from the Scriptures, and many others might be referred to. The history of the church, and your own observation and experience will furnish more. In this important matter, however, you must earnestly pray for divine direction.

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## TOPIC XVIII.

### CONTRAST WORDS AND ACTIONS.

You may oppose the agonies and terrors which seized Jesus Christ at the approach of death, to the constancy



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and joy of the martyrs, who flew to martyrdom as a victory. This contrariety of emotions is accounted for by the difference of the persons and circumstances. Jesus Christ was the reconciler of sinners unto God; bearing their sins, and engaging with the eternal justice of the Father: but the martyrs were believers, reconciled to God; fighting under Christ's banners; and, as mystical soldiers, maintaining his righteous claims. Christ was filled with a sense of God's wrath against sin; the martyrs were filled with a sense of his love to them. He met death as an armed enemy; but they met him as a vanquished foe, or rather as an enemy reconciled, who, having changed his nature, was become favourable to believers. In one word, Jesus Christ was at war with death, whereas death was at peace and in friendship with the martyrs. In general we may affirm, that contrast is one of the most beautiful topics of Christian rhetoric, and that which furnishes the most striking illustrations: great care, however, must be taken, that the opposition be natural, easy to comprehend, and properly placed in a full, clear light. So far Monsieur Claude; and to which I beg leave to add, as a proof of the excellency of this Topic, that the Book of Proverbs, many of the Psalms, &c., are beautiful assemblages of contrasts: yet public speakers should not indulge *too freely* in them; even jewels and diamonds lose their effect by too great profusion.

This and the preceding Topic may possibly, at first sight, seem to interfere with each other; but it will be manifest, on a little reflection, that the similarity between them is rather apparent than real, rather in sound than in sense. For the purpose of occasional observation, the foregoing Topic is certainly of some value, and has a province peculiar to itself; but it is very limited in its application, and furnishes no materials for division or extended discussion. Besides, it ought to be observed that we compare

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two or more things together in order to an examination where the truth lies; but we contrast things to make more striking a thing already known and acknowledged. The present Topic is of more extensive application: perhaps there is no subject on which a reference to it may not assist the preacher, either in the study or in the pulpit; and it may be employed in any or in every part of a discourse, as expediency may dictate. Contrast, it is obvious, may sometimes take the lead in an exordium, and at others it may bring up the rear in a peroration. On some occasions it may form one division or subdivision of a discourse, and on others every head or division will turn upon it. Sometimes it may be introduced as a figure of rhetoric, or as a casual illustration; and sometimes many contrasts may be clustered together in a kind of rhetorical close column, to aid the purpose of argument or persuasion. Mr. Robinson, who could be excellent when his wit would allow him, justly remarks on this subject that "there is no end of the utility of *contrast* in theology; it illustrates revelation by contrasting it with all the systems of false religion: "Never man spake like this man;" John vii. 46. It illustrates Christianity by placing it opposite to Judaism: "Ye are not come to mount Sinai, but to mount Zion;" Heb. xii. 18. It distinguishes the true ministers of Jesus Christ from pretenders: "We are not as many who corrupt the word of God; but *we* speak as of God;" 2 Cor. ii. 17. It displays the beauty of the true church by comparing it with the deformity of false religions: "What agreement has the temple of God with idols?" 2 Cor. vi. 16. It is of excellent use in preaching the law, by contrasting what men *are* with what they *ought to be;* 2 Pet. iii. 11. It is excellently adapted to comfort, by contrasting the wisdom of Providence with the folly of him who complains of it; the sufficiency of pardoning mercy with the abundance of a sinner's unworthiness; the pleasures of piety with the

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amusements of sin; the privileges of a saint with the licentiousness of a sinner; the aids of the Holy Spirit with the efforts of the tempter. It will be of use in recovering a backslider, by comparing his present with his former state; Jer. ii. In these, and a thousand other cases, contrast is lovely beyond expression." The human mind is so constructed as to be always pleased with contrasts; and accordingly the ingenuity of man has been put to its full stretch in order to produce them in relation to matters of sight, taste, &c. In music, for example, harmonies would not always please; a skilful composer therefore throws in discords at certain intervals, that his concords may return more pleasantly on the ear. The painter must, for the same reason, have his light and shade; and the cook finds it necessary to tempt and gratify the palate by producing his acids and his sweets in the same dish. Theatrical exhibitions are no doubt indebted to this love of contrast for much of their celebrity; for the characters of the drama are commonly most pleasing when set in the strongest point of opposition, which is sometimes carried to a degree that is almost ridiculous.

It has been often said, by critics in language, that the very free use of contrast is a fault. If, however, the Scriptures are to form our standard, we shall be in little danger of offending by its too frequent employment; for there is probably no figure of rhetoric so much used in Scripture as this: in the hagiographical books contrasts are grouped so thickly as to raise our admiration and astonishment. The striking character of this Topic, and the facility with which it can be comprehended by the great mass of the people, furnish a powerful apology for its use; and it is surely a pity (to use no stronger term) that well educated persons should indulge such a fastidious disposition as to nauseate that which is so useful to their less favoured brethren; besides which they ought to have some reverence for the example afforded by the extensive use that is made of it in the

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word of God. However, prudence will certainly dictate to the preacher the propriety of watching against real excess.

The ample volumes of nature and providence abound with materials well adapted to the purpose of contrast; and these furnish an interesting and intelligible language for expressing spiritual ideas. We have day and night, light and darkness, winter and summer, spring and autumn, heat and cold, tempest and serenity. In the earth we have barren and fruitful soils, lofty mountains and deep valleys, the arid desert and the flowing brook, &c. In the creatures, what an endless catalogue of varieties are presented! Animals fierce and tame; immensely large and diminutively small. The products of the ground how contrary! Some vegetables bitter, some sweet; some purgative, some astringent. In the structure of men's minds we observe a like variety: some formed for soaring with almost the intelligence of angels, others possessing the imbecility of idiots, and scarcely raised above the brutes; some minds seem made for ruling, others are quite of a passive character; some are full of passion and feeling, others all indifference and apathy.

With regard to the primary intention of the Topic, as a topic of observation, it is not necessary for me to add any thing. If you are preaching on some expression of the good man's feelings or desires, it may be placed in contrast with the desires and feelings of the wicked. If the conduct of the believer in Christ comes before you, it may be considered as contrasted with the conduct of the unbeliever in similar circumstances, &c. In fact, every thing that forms the subject of discourse must have some opposite, and, by placing it in contrast with such opposite, it will frequently be found to receive its strongest illustration; for the most lovely object never appears so exquisitely beautiful as when placed by the side of deformity, nor does folly ever appear so conspicuously absurd as when con-

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trasted with the dictates of true wisdom. That preacher who possesses the ability, natural or acquired, of thus placing the objects of instruction in contrast before his hearers, will consequently seldom fail to edify and please. Sometimes your text will invite a reference to this Topic, by containing what may be called an implied contrast: as Isa. lxvi. 2: "To *this* man will I look who is of a poor and contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word." Here there is an evident intention of contrasting the humble saint with the proud superficial pretender to religion; and if we would preserve the spirit of the text throughout our discussion, we must take due notice of such contrast. This may be done by observing that the individual here described as the object of divine complacency is,

I. The *poor* man—one who is sensible of his emptiness—in opposition to those who in their own eyes are "rich and increased in goods, having need of nothing," though in fact they are "poor, and wretched," &c.

II. The *contrite* man, who grieves on account of his transgressions—in opposition to the fool who mocks at sin, and glories in that which is his shame.

III. The man who trembles at God's word—in opposition to the self-confident and the secure.

No. 2.—Mr. Jay has a beautiful sermon on the contrast plan, vol. ii., sermon 29, on Rom. v. 5: "Hope maketh not ashamed." Here the words *not ashamed* suggested the antithesis; for if the Christian's hope be distinguished as one which maketh not ashamed, it is implied that all other hopes may make ashamed. He says,

I. Certain kinds of hope do make ashamed.

1. The hope of the worldling, by the insufficiency of its objects.

2. That of the Pharisee, by the weakness of its foundation.

3. That of the Antinomian, by the falseness of its warrant.

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II. The believer's, on the contrary, "maketh not ashamed."

1. It is accompanied by divine love.

2. This love characterizes its possessors.

3. It qualifies for that future glory upon which its intents are fixed.

No. 3.—Mr. Burder, vol. vii., p. 25, on Numb. xiv. 24: "My servant Caleb, because he hath another spirit." Here is the contrast:

I. Real Christians are actuated by a spirit different from that of the world. "Caleb hath *another* spirit."

II. Those who possess a right spirit will follow the Lord *fully*.

III. Those who follow the Lord fully shall be honourably distinguished by him.

In this example the preacher pursues the contrast implied in the text under his first division: in the preceding one the two general divisions contain the separate points to be contrasted. Some reflection is certainly required in order to determine which of these plans should have the preference on any particular subject.

No. 4.—Beddome, vol. i, p. 136, on John viii. 9: "Being convicted by their own conscience," discusses the implied contrast. The words *own conscience* imply that there existed another species of conviction, that is, such as was impressed by the Spirit of God; and here he establishes a contrast which pervades the whole discourse. The following is the division:

I. Some distinctions with respect to conscience itself.

It may be considered as,

1. Ignorant or enlightened.

2. Unnecessarily scrupulous or daringly presumptuous.

3. Pure or defiled.

4. Tender or seared.

5. Peaceable or troublesome.

6. Natural or renewed.——These are all contrasts.

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II. The difference between natural and spiritual convictions.

1. Natural convictions regard only the guilt of sin, as in the case of Cain; the spiritual are attended with a deep and painful sense of inherent guilt and pollution, as in the parable of the prodigal.

2. In natural convictions the soul is actuated by slavish fear; but those of the Divine Spirit have more of a regard to the honour of God.

3. The natural extend only to some sin, as Achan and as Judas; but the spiritual is convinced of all: "Come see one that has told me all that ever I did."

4. Natural conviction soon wears away; the other is permanent.

5. One may consist with love of sin; the other hates every false way.

I have selected these instances of implied contrasts for examples, because whenever contrast is thus noticed it discovers some ingenuity in the preacher, in his discerning the justness of such a turn of thought. When this is done in a sensible manner it cannot fail, I should think, of producing a good effect, from the circumstance of its being unexpected by the audience.

The following are examples in which the preachers follow out the contrast which is expressed in the text itself.

No. 5.—I have already given a mere outline of Bishop Sanderson's famous sermon on Prov. xix. 21: "There are many devices," &c. As the bishop's works are however in but few hands, I may be allowed here to make an enlarged quotation. We have a proverb, "Man purposeth but God disposeth," not an unfit glossary on the text. Our author considers,

I. The different names here employed: ours are "devices;" his are "counsels." The names of things are used in Scripture with far greater accuracy than in many ther writings; the word "devices," for instance: in some cases

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these may appear to be wise, but compared with God's "counsels" they are only imaginations, fancies, or any lighter name that can be found; for every name is too high and too honourable to give expression to their vacuity and nothingness. Very chimeras they are, castles in the air, that have no real existence in them, no base or bottom to support them: they are fancies, and so the word might very well be translated: there are many fancies in man's heart, such as may sometimes appear in madmen destitute of judgment, who will occasionally throw out such satirical wit, and make such smart repartees, as to excite astonishment. Or these fancies are like ill concocted dreams, which represent golden mountains and airy nothings, which yet affect the dreamer excessively.* Solomon treats of these as "vanity,

* Mr. Howe pursues the subject of dreams very ingeniously in his sermon on 1 Thess. v. 6: "Let us not sleep as do others." Tracing the resemblances between a person in a state of sleep and a person in the delusions of fallen nature, he considers,

I. The sleep referred to.

1. As a state of forgetfulness. Sleepy persons are oblivious: so men are forgetful of their sinful, fallen state; they have forgotten their Creator, and the guide of their youth.

2. As a state of insensibility. Persons in a profound sleep cannot be made to feel without difficulty sometimes; you may even prick them, yet they do not feel. Sinners likewise are dead in sin, in a dead sleep, as we say; it is very difficult to prick them to the heart. Acts ii. 37.

3. As a state of security and unapprehensiveness of a future threatened danger. The house may be on fire, thieves and murderers at hand, the sword at the breast, or the knife at the throat; yet they are free from fear. Do we not see this exemplified in sinners? Destruction from the Almighty is no terror to them. Or like persons in their nocturnals, who if not prevented would climb parapets and incur ruin.

4. As a state of misapprehension. It is common for persons in sleep to have their heads full of false images, or false conceptions of things which are true: the case is so with the world in their sleep; they can tell you how to dis-imagine all the greatest realities, and turn them into shadows. God and Christ, heaven and hell, they will call these fancies; but the pomp and grandeur of this world which are truly so called, μετα πολλης φαντασιας, Acts xxv. 23, are counted by them as realities.

5. There is also (which is much like the last) a great unaptness to reflect upon any thing as absurd, though never so truly so, which occurs to them in their dreaming state. Let things occur to them

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folly, and madness;" Eccles. ii. 1, 2, &c. They applaud themselves in their cunning and deep contrivances; they trust to their wealth, power, strength, or policy; they think they can carry all before them, yet all shall terminate "like a dream when one awaketh: so shalt thou make their image to vanish out of the city." There is a similar representation in Isa. xxix. 7, 8: They that fight against "Mount Zion shall be even as when a hungry man dreameth that he is eating," &c. Or the deepest policy shall be as a spider's web—that is one of the prophet's comparisons too; a thing of great curiosity to the eye, spun of a most fine, subtle thread, and in a most exact proportion; but a thing of no strength at all, unless against a small fly (the greater ones will break through it): the slightest touch strikes it all away in a moment.

Now contrast these with God's eternal purposes—it is not so with them. They are sage counsels, called "the counsel of the Lord." Ps. xxxiii. 11: "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever; the thoughts of his heart to all generations." This seems copied in the New Testament, Eph. i. 11: "According to the eternal purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

never so absurd, they take no notice of the absurdity: let them dream themselves to be in never such odd and antic postures or situations, they find no error, all is reality. And so is the case with the world too: the most absurd things imaginable are no absurdities to them; busying themselves all their days about mere trifles, the most absurd things that ever could enter into human imagination so much as to think of, are yet no absurdities to them, even to live without God in the world, though he made them and preserves them; without any care whether they go to hell or not.

6. The proper business of life is suspended, Prov. vi. 9, 10; and so it is with men in the affair of salvation: Heb. ii. 3.

7. They are greatly displeased with those who attempt to rouse them, and they will quarrel with the light itself if it shine upon their faces; the very case with those who are in the deep sleep of sin.

II. Upon what account it ill becomes Christians to imitate these sleepers. It is very unsuitable,

1. To their principles.
2. To their state.
3. To their designs and ends.

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Yet we are not to receive the term in its proper sense. In strictness God neither counsels nor debates, nor "has any counselled him;" Rom. xi. 34. God has no need of these: in truth, as the word devices was too high in the first case, so the word counsel is too low in the present case. Scripture in this, as well as in many other parts, adapts its language to men's understandings; as, "By him actions are weighed." Such are the resolutions which, following upon good advice and mature deliberation, where all the circumstances are taken into due consideration, and the conveniences and inconveniences examined and weighed, are better approved of, as being more solid, and likely to prove more successful, than those sudden motions that light people hit upon—as lightning, which is but a flash, while sound counsels are like the sun, which has a full and durable light within itself, always alike though sometimes under a cloud. God's counsels "of old are faithfulness and truth."

II. There is a difference as to number: ours are "devices," in the plural number, and with the express addition of multiplicity, "many devices." God's is but one—"counsel," in the singular.

Men's purposes are various and changeable: seldom do we continue long in one mind; but on every slight occasion, as the weathercock with the wind, we are ready to turn and face about. What between fears and hopes, desires and cares, our thoughts are so pulled and harrowed this way and that way, that we are often so distracted that we scarcely know what the next expedient ought to be. Sometimes this is not of necessity, but a change of mere whim or caprice—fond, like children, of a toy this moment, the next throwing it away for another; *Quod petiit spernit:* and men are thus "troubled about many things." All this proves this one thing, at the least—the positive insufficiency of all and every earthly good; for if one

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good thing were attained, multiplicity need not be called in.

It is therefore no commendation then, but rather a disparagement, to men's devices that they are so many; but it is the honour of God that his counsel is but one, and unchangeable. We find it expressed with that adjunct, Heb. vi. 17, το αμεταθετον της βουλης, "the immutability of his counsel;" and it is there laid down as the great foundation of Christian hope, and the very strength of our consolation. *Quod scripsi, scripsi.* What he has written in the secret book of his determinate counsel, though it be counsel to us and uncertain, until he reveal it or the event discover it, yet is it most certain in itself, and altogether unchangeable. We follow our devices many times, which we afterwards repent; and truly our second thoughts are mostly the best. But with him there is no after-counsel to correct the errors of the former. He knoweth not any such thing as repentance—it is altogether hid from his eyes. He is, indeed, sometimes said to repent, as Gen. vi. and Jonah iii. 10; but this is not ascribed to God properly, but as other human passions and affections are, as grief, sorrow, &c., ανθρωποπαθως, to import some actions of God, eventually, and according to the manner of our understanding, like unto the operations which those passions produce in us, but have nothing at all of the nature of those passions in him. See Numb. xxiii. 19.

III. The different manner of their existing. Ours are but conceived in the heart; but he is able to give real subsistence to his designs, and to make them stand fast and firm: "The counsel of the Lord, that shall stand."

It is not material here whether these devices be hatched in the heart or the head, whether they relate to the affections or the understanding; how many soever they may be, unless God give leave, there they must stay. It is no matter how man plots and contrives to avoid this or that

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danger, to compass this or that design, to gratify this friend or advance that child, to counteract or defeat that enemy; for when man has summoned all his powers, and set all his wits to work to manage his design and make all sure, unless God say Amen, and unless it please him to prosper this or that—all is in vain. Ps. cxxvii. 1, 2.

These thoughts may indeed reach the tongue, and man may speak "great swelling words of vanity;" but still, if God put a negative to his affirmative, it is soon settled, as in the fool's scheme in the gospel, or as Sennacherib in Hezekiah's time.

But as to the counsel of God, it is established like the everlasting mountains which cannot be moved. What he has purposed either himself to do, or to have done by any of his creatures, shall most certainly and most infallibly come to pass in every circumstance, just as he has appointed it. It is established in the heavens; and though all the powers in earth and hell should join their forces together, and set their shoulders and strength against it, and thrust sore at it so that it may fall, yet shall they never be able to move or shake it, much less to remove it from the place where it stands, or to overthrow it. This, I presume, has been sufficiently established, as Matt. xvi. 18. Not only because of the eternity of his own being, nor because he is the author of all being, but also for that he is able to give being, reality, and subsistence to his own will and words, to all his purposes and promises.

Our excellent author establishes this point on such perfections of God as bear upon this subject—his sovereignty, his eternity, his wisdom, and his power; topics to the study of which you should devote your noblest intellectual powers.

No. 6.—Davies, vol. i., p. 298, on 2 Cor. iv. 18: "While we look not at the things which are seen," &c Here also the contrast lies in the text itself, and a heavenly-

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minded preacher must dwell with delight on such a contrast. Our author proposes,

I. To give a comparative view of visible and invisible things. This I do, he observes, that you may see the trifling nature of the one, and the importance of the other, under one head.

II. To show the great and happy influence which a suitable impression of the superior importance of invisible to visible things would have upon us.

The whole sermon is full of contrast; and it is conducted in such a manner as at once to impress and instruct.

No. 7.—Davies, vol. iii., p. 189, on Matt. ix. 12: "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

I. The character of the whole.

1. They are such as never had any clear and affecting sight or sense of sin.

2. They are easy and secure.

3. Unwilling to apply to a physician.

II. The character of the sick.

1. They are willing to do any thing, to submit to any thing, if it may but save them from the mortal disease of sin.

2. Satisfied that Jesus is the only physician of souls, they rest upon his skill, love, and care.

3. They come to Jesus and are healed.

This is not one of Davies's best sermons; and I have been obliged to alter the second part to preserve the contrast: the subject itself is well suited to a mixed congregation.

No. 8.—Beddome, vol. iii., p. 80, James ii. 18: "Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show mine by my works."

I. True faith is a visible grace; defective faith is audible only.

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II. True faith is fruitful; faith without works is dead.

III. Those who pretend to faith, and yet are destitute of good works, are awfully deceived.

Surely such contrasts as these will supply the place of many arguments; for we see here at a glance the case as it stands. In short, contrast is argument in miniature, *multum in parvo*. It is like flame or blaze, in comparison of smoke; for argument is often as dark as smoke, at least to illiterate people.

No. 9.—We have an instance in Walker, vol. iii., p. 7, on 1 Thess. ii. 4: "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts." His arrangement is as follows:

I. The nature and extent of the divine principle mentioned in the text—a supreme desire to please God.

II. The happy effects which would flow from our being animated with this steady and prevailing desire.

1. This would make us ready to every good word and work.

2. Our conduct would thereby be consistent and uniform.

3. A sincere desire of pleasing God would lessen the difficulties of obedience, and support us under all the sufferings to which duty may expose us.

But to set these advantages in a more striking light, let us,

III. Examine the opposite principle, and take a view of the man whose great aim is to obtain the approbation of his fellow-creatures. Consider,

1. To what drudgery he submits.

2. How trivial the acquisition, should he succeed.

3. To what disappointments he is exposed.

4. How precarious and uncertain the possession.

This outline possesses a quality distinct from all the former, by its being addressed more to the philosophy of the mind and its reasoning powers; but the strength and

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excellence of the discourse is owing to the contrast exhibited. Blair's sermon on the Love of Praise, vol. ii., p. 148, to which I shall have occasion to refer in a future Lecture, is excellent; but it is comparatively weak for want of that antithesis in which Walker's excels.

No. 10.—The following is from Mr. Edward Cooper, whose work has gone through many editions. It is from vol. i., p. 31. Matt. vi. 24: "No man can serve two masters," &c. Here the contrast is the "two masters," &c. He proposes to,

I. Open the text, by stating the case which it exhibits.

II. Consider the contrast it contains, and the separate demands alluded to.

God's demands are of the highest order—God peremptorily says, Love thy neighbour; Mammon says, Love thyself. (These and similar contrasts are pursued to a great length.)

You have an instance of the use of this Topic in Ps. cxlv. 16: "Thou openest thine hand," &c.; and here Mr. Fuller takes you by the hand, and leads you into the practice of contrast in the most familiar manner possible.

I shall conclude this Lecture by giving an instance of argumentative contrast, something similar to which, if it be not inimitable, may be thrown into any part of a discourse. It is addressed to light and thoughtless youth, who are prejudiced against religion; but the whole essay ought to be read a dozen times over for its matter, manner, and style, which are of the highest order. The devotee of youthful folly and dissipation is introduced as murmuring at the restraints and the sanctions of religion:—

A cruel alternative! to yield such submission or incur such consequences. Is it not hard that I should be required to surrender all the delights which are the privilege of my age; to repress my vivacity, to forsake my gay society, abandon my amusements, to inflict self-denial at every turn, to deplore all that I am and all that I have

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been, to force my attention and affections away from this interesting world around me towards another and unseen world of which I know nothing, to toil through severe and never-ceasing exercises called discipline, to exhaust my spirits in solemn reflection, to live in terror lest every thing I do or enjoy should be sin, to renounce and put myself in conflict with the prevailing habits of society, to be marked as an over-righteous or melancholy mortal, to look through a darkened medium at every thing in life, and go through the world thinking of every step as a progress toward the grave?

But you well know that such a representation is no just account of the demands of religion. At the same time we wish not to keep out of view or to underrate, as some persons have injudiciously attempted to do, the austerer characteristics of Christianity. It must be unequivocally avowed that religion, effectually prosecuted, does involve great labours, a discipline often severe, and therefore many painful experiences. It must include much that is mortifying to natural inclinations. How should it be otherwise with a being of a corrupt nature, who is to be trained and prepared, and that while under the incessant influences of a corrupt world, for a final state of holiness and felicity? If the natural condition of the mind be uncongenial with what is divine and heavenly; its affections unattempered to love and delight in that element which is the vitality of the happiness of the beings whom, alone and exclusively, the revelation from God, and even your own reason, authorize you to conceive of as happy in a superior state; if there be this alienation and unfitness (and what is aversion to religion but the proof of it? or rather it is the thing itself); if the case be so, then the soul is in a condition so dreadfully wrong, that it is not strange the agency for transforming it should inflict pain in the salutary process. That it should work with some expedients of bitterness, keenness, and fire, is quite in analogy with the operations



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necessary for subduing the extreme maladies of an inferior order.

Religion, it is acknowledged, brings its pains; just because it comes from heaven to maintain a deadly conflict in the soul, with principles and dispositions which are rebellious against heaven, and destructive to the soul itself. It is fit that you should see the whole truth, and clearly understand that the agent which, in a capacity like that of a tutelary spirit, takes in charge a perverted, sinful, tempted being, to be humbled and reclaimed, taught many mortifying lessons, disciplined through a series of many corrections, reproved, restrained, and incited, and thus conducted onward in advancing preparation for the happiness of another world, must be the inflicter of many pains during the progress of this beneficent guardianship. And it is not, as your aversion and murmurs would imply, the fault of religion that the case is so, but of that depraved nature which religion is designed and indispensable to redeem.

So much for the darker side. But now, on the other hand, you can surely conceive, as compatible with all this, a great preponderance of happiness in this religious life, which, before you had duly weighed, you thought to be incompatible with it. And therefore you ought to take it on your conscience, as a reproach for criminal want of thought or of honesty, that you admitted no other notion of religion than that of a gloomy, melancholy thing. Instead of turning away from it as a grim and ghostly object, sent to encounter you for no more friendly purpose than to obstruct you, with threatening aspect, at every avenue to the scenes of delight, there ought to arise within your mind a sterner image to condemn you for wilfully misjudging its character, and the service it has to offer you. For you *can* comprehend that there is attainable, through the efficiency of religion, something far better than all you can hope ever to enjoy under the unhallowed advantage of rejecting it.

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Try faithfully whether you cannot understand that it would be a great felicity to feel that your spirit is changing into conformity to a nobler model, growing into the only right constitution and image to be retained for ever; to feel that the evil which infests it is shrinking and subdued under a mightier power; to regard the best and greatest Being as no longer an appalling object, thought of with reluctance, and a wish that you could be for ever out of his sight and reach; but now, with emotions of love, and confidence, and hope, with an assurance of his mercy through Jesus Christ, with an experience of real communication with him concerning all your interests, and with a consciousness that you are in activity for a Master who will confer an infinite reward. Think whether it would not be happy to feel habitually a power maintaining a sacred control over your passions and your will, and preserving the current of your life unmingled with the world's pollutions. Imagine yourself animated at the close of each year, or shorter period, with fervent gratitude to God in consideration of what sins and follies he has saved you from thus much longer. Can you doubt whether that one emotion would really be worth more, to an accountable being, than all the pleasurable feelings which an irreligious person can have enjoyed during the whole interview?

Place before your mind a scheme of life in which you shall see yourself committed to the care and disposal of a beneficent Providence, the course of your life from the beginning, with a constant assurance that sovereign wisdom and goodness will watch over all its movements and events, will conduct you through its perplexities and perils, will give you just so much temporal good that more would not be for your welfare, and will constrain all things you are to pass through to co-operate to your ultimate happiness. Think also of enjoying the consciousness that you are not throwing the inestimable spring-season of your life away, but expending it so as to enrich every succeeding period, and



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to ensure a fine setting sun upon the last. Say, honestly, whether all this be not something better than any scheme of life which you have indulged your imagination in shaping. Or, if you sometimes surrender yourself to the fascinations of romance and poetry, glowing over bright pictures of felicity in which religion has no place, make the experiment on your mind, in an hour of cooler feeling, whether you dare pronounce that it would be well to forego this happiness of religion by a preference of that which is exhibited in these highly coloured fictions, on the supposition that they could, for you, be turned into reality. Yes, *if* these images could be turned into facts; but let me hint to you that the very exhibitors of these delectable fabrications out of air would scorn your folly in expecting any such realization.

Observe some of those young persons (I hope you are not so unfortunate as not to know such) whom you yourself believe to be most under the power of religion; call them, if you will, its prisoners, its bondmen, its slaves; some of your gay companions attempt to ridicule them as its fools; but do you observe whether their piety conduces to their happiness. It is true they are not happy after the manner in which your lighter friends account of happiness; not happy, if the true signs of that state be a volatile spirit, a continual glitter of mirth, a dissipation of mind and time among trifles, a dread of reflection and solitude, an eager pursuit of amusements; in short, a prevailing thoughtlessness, the chief suspensions of which are for the study of matters of appearance and fashion, the servile care of faithfully imitating the habits and notions of a class, or perhaps the acquirement of accomplishments for show. It must be confessed they have thoughts too grave, the sense of too weighty an interest, a conscience too solicitous, and purposes too high, to permit them any rivalry with the votaries of *such* felicity. Certainly they feel a dignity in their vocation

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which denies them the pleasure of being frivolous. But you see them often cheerful, and sometimes very animated. And their animation is of a deeper tone than that of your sportive creatures; it may have less of animal briskness, but there is more soul in it. It is the action and fire of the greater passions, directed to greater objects. Their emotions are more internal and cordial; they can be cherished and abide within the heart with a prolonged, deep, vital glow; while those which spring in the youthful minds devoid of reflection and religion, seem to give no pleasure but in being thrown in volatile spirits at the surface. Did you think that these disciples of religion must renounce the love of pleasure? Look then at their policy for securing it. The most unfortunate calculation for pleasure is to live expressly for it. They live primarily for duty, and pleasure comes as a certain consequence. If you have but a cold apprehension of the degree of such pleasure, if you can but faintly conceive how it should be poignant, you can at least understand that it must be genuine. And there is in it what may be called a principle of accumulation; it does not vanish in the enjoyment, but, while passing as a sentiment, remains as a reflection, and grows into a store of complacent consciousness, which the mind retains as a possession left by what has been possessed. To have had such pleasures is pleasure, and is so still the more, the more of it is past. Whereas you are aware, if you have been at all observant of the feelings betrayed by the youthful children of folly in the intervals of their delights (and does nothing in your experience obtrude the same testimony?), that those delights, when past, are wholly gone; leaving nothing to go into a calm habitual sense of being happy. The pleasure is a blaze which consumes entirely the material on which it is lighted; so that the uncalculating youth who seized a transient pleasure last week, or yesterday, has no satisfaction from it to-day, but rather, perhaps, feels fretted with a sense of being

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cheated, and left in an irksome vacancy, from which he has no relief but in recovering his eagerness to pursue another, which is, in the same manner, to pass entirely away. To insist, therefore, that religion is better than this giddy course, as productive of happiness in this life, would seem but an impertinent pleading in its favour.

Now, for once, be a thoughtful and serious being, willing to apprehend the *contrast* between all this vanity of pursuit and the state of a young person who feels a profound conviction that he has made the right choice; who finds that his grand purpose will bear the severest exercise of his judgment, and pleases him the most when he judges the most rigorously; who feels an elation of spirit in vowing an eternal fidelity to his object; who beholds it undiminished in excellence when gloom overspreads his other interests and prospects; a luminary which shines through and shines the brighter for the darkness.—*Foster's Introductory Essay* to the Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*, p. 42—50.

* Vide Howe, in Stafford, on Romans, p. 320; or Howe's Living Temple; new edit., part 2, chap. 4, p. 325. A most excellent article, but too long for insertion. Chalmers on Astronomy, p. 166; and on Ezek. xxxiii. 32. Jortin, vol. ii., p. 305.

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# LECTURE XXII.

## TOPIC XIX.

### EXAMINE THE GROUNDS OF AN ACTION OR EXPRESSION, TO SHOW THE TRUTH OR EQUITY OF IT.

CLAUDE gives, as the title of this Topic, "*Examine the grounds and causes of an action or expression, and show the truth and equity of it.*" When the incarnation of Jesus Christ is in question, as in John i. 14, "And the Word was made flesh," &c., &c., you may recur to the foundation of this truth, as revealed in Scripture, in order to show that a divine person did take upon him real, true humanity, in opposition to the notions of some ancient heretics, who imagined that the human nature of Christ was only apparent. For this purpose, you must look into the ancient prophecies for such passages as attribute two natures to Christ, Isa. vii. 14; ix. 6; Mic. v. 1. To the same purpose you may also apply New Testament texts which speak of the same subject, as Matt. i. 21, 23; Luke i. 31, 35; 1 Tim. iii. 16; Heb. ii. 14, &c. And you may further observe such reasons for this singular economy as theology furnishes, and which are taken from the design of our salvation. In like manner, when you treat of the resurrection of Christ, or his ascension to heaven, you must take this Topic, and show the fidelity and credibility of the testimony borne by the disciples. Your argument

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may be established* by observing what followed his resurrection and ascension, as the effusion of the Spirit, the abolition of the empire of the devil and his idols, the conversion of whole nations to the worship of the one true God, miracles, prophecies, &c. Thus the Scriptures are the ground of our faith; our doctrines, the ground of our practice; the love and good pleasure of God are the ground of salvation. I said, also, *the grounds and causes of an action or expression* might be examined, to show the equity and truth of either, and especially where any thing is commanded that is repulsive to mere human nature, as that seemingly rigid self-denial which Christ enjoined upon all his followers.† Here show the grounds and causes of such an injunction, Matt. xvi. 24; here you may show, 1. That these words have an immediate reference to some good end, an end the most worthy of the Christian character and calling, the Christian ministry; consequently such mortifications and self-denial as are really necessary to that end must be imposed. 2. The injunction supposes that there is something within us that would, if not restrained, obstruct the accomplishment of that end, and that must be denied most peremptorily, steadily, and perseveringly. 3. That such end should be so clearly kept in view, so impressively felt, and so highly prized, as to induce us to deny ourselves, and to lay aside every weight, &c.; Heb. xii. 1. 4. That this self-denial is nothing else but an exchange of objects, the glory of God, the good of souls, instead of that mean thing called *self*, in all its hateful forms and detestable bearings. It is nothing else than an exchange of gratifications, the gratifications aris-

* Although Monsieur Claude provides these Topics as furniture for observation, and this *only*, yet he is here pointing out the use of a Topic as it would naturally be used in propositional preaching, or regular argumentative discourse, beyond the limits of a mere observation.

† Claude's illustration is here exchanged for one better suited to candidates for the Christian ministry.

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ing from the pleasure of doing good, instead of eating, drinking, ease, and carnal pleasures, which, if pursued, would only terminate in disease of body and guilt of conscience. It is but putting a wholesome restraint on the worst principle of our nature, self-love.

In the original title to this Topic, Monsieur Claude proposes to examine the *grounds* and *causes* of an action, &c.; but as the two ideas appear to me perfectly distinct, and as I have included the latter under the Topic "Principles," to which I think it properly belongs, I shall confine my present observations to the former, and endeavour as much as possible to abstain from every idea to which my remarks on the twelfth Topic referred. It is quite possible, however, that after all the care I can bestow to preserve consistency, I may, in some measure, fail of accomplishing this purpose, and I must acknowledge that the grounds of a subject may lie in its principle or in its implications: but it would have been evidently improper to have thrown the whole subject of grounds into either of those departments; for, besides the possible error involved in it, this would have been throwing the greater into the less.

This Topic comprehends all the points of consideration on which any doctrine or practice is founded—the proofs or arguments by which any truth is supported, or any practice enforced. Grounds may sometimes be cast into a propositional form; and may be in their nature theological or moral, practical or experimental, persuasive or cautionary; or the Topic may be turned against error, false grounds, and vain pretences. In a field so extensive and so important the preacher can never want matter; something upon one or other of these heads will be continually recurring, either in the beginning or body of the discourse. However, I would not have the people to be teazed perpetually with an extensive discussion of the



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grounds of every truth brought before them, as this might have the effect of diminishing their attention: "to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven;" and even when the thing is proper enough in itself, and quite seasonable, yet there is a *quantum sufficit*, and a time to have done, or to pass on to the other parts of the discourse. Sometimes a passing remark on the Topic will be sufficient; and frequently this may form the exordium of your discourse. Since, however, there can be little difficulty in applying the Topic in its less extended form, as a topic of observation, I shall not here detain you with any illustrations in addition to those which you have, but shall proceed at once to place before you some examples in which the Topic forms a prominent part, and I trust that some of these examples will be found so excellent and instructive as to require no apology.

No. 1. Mr. Simeon, in his appendix to his Horæ Homileticæ, No. 290, furnishes an example on the doctrine of the Trinity, the first part of which is formed on the Topic. His text is Isa. xlviii. 16: "Now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me."

So mysterious and important a doctrine as that of a trinity of persons in the Godhead ought not to be founded on any grounds which are not clear, strong, adequate, and convincing. But it may be illustrated from passages on which we could not altogether venture to establish it. Such is the present text. In the forty-seventh chapter God is declaring that he will destroy Babylon, and restore his captive people to their own land; and, throughout the chapter whence the text is selected, he warns his people to bear in remembrance that he had foretold this event several hundred years before it should be accomplished; and that, consequently, when it should occur, they must trace it to Jehovah himself, who had fore-ordained this deliverance, and designed it to be a type of that greater deliverance

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which he would effect for a ruined world. It is in this connexion that the speaker says, "Now the Lord God, and his Spirit, hath sent me;" and if the prophet be the speaker, then the sense of the passage is clear: viz., The Lord has sent me to announce to you these great events. But if the speaker be the Son of God, which is more agreeable with the context, then a small alteration must be made in our translation, and the passage must be read, "Now the Lord God hath sent me and his Spirit;"—hath sent me to effect this great deliverance, and his Spirit to reveal it unto you; and this is the sense which most expositors adopt. But, whichever construction we prefer, the passage clearly intimates a plurality in the persons of the Godhead, which is the doctrine now to be established.

I. Trace the scriptural authority on which this doctrine is grounded.

We may reasonably expect the doctrine of the Trinity, if true, to pervade the Scriptures throughout. Accordingly we do find it more or less clearly intimated from the beginning. Let us trace it,

1. In the Old Testament. In the very first chapter of the Bible, where the creation of all things is declared, there is a plurality of persons mentioned, as determining to complete the whole by the formation of man: Gen. i. 26. So again at the expulsion of man from Paradise, a similar representation is given: iii. 22. At the building of the tower of Babel, also, the Deity speaks of himself in the same manner: xi. 7. In like manner, where the Messiah is spoken of, a plurality is almost always marked. In his qualification for his work: Isa. xi. 2; lxi. 1. The effect of his mission: Zech. ii. 11.

2. In the New Testament. Mark the terms in which his incarnation was announced; Luke i. 35. His consecration to the mediatorial office at his baptism: Matt. iii. 16, 17. See also Matt. xxviii. 19; 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

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II. Consider the particular offices attributed in Scripture to Father, Son, and Spirit. These clearly manifest the distinction which we are considering.

1. The Father is the fountain from whom the whole of salvation proceeds.

2. The Lord Jesus Christ has come to procure salvation for us: Isa. xlii. 1; Ps. xl. 6—8; Eph. v. 2.

3. The Holy Spirit applies this salvation to us. See John xv. 26, xvi. 14, xvi. 8, xiv. 16; 1 Thess. v. 23; Rom. viii. 16: Eph. i. 13, 14; Rom. viii. 11; and particularly notice what Peter says (1 Pet. i. 2): "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

III. The comfort which the knowledge of these facts is calculated to give.

Almost endless are the blessed inferences that would follow upon the doctrine in hand: but it must suffice to mention two things. Have the sacred Three so concurred in the work of redemption? Then we may be assured of,

1. The readiness of Jehovah to save us.

2. The sufficiency of the salvation thus provided.

Here are exhibited the grounds of a doctrine which ought to pass, not only into every congregation, but also into every school in the kingdom. I should recommend the preacher to enlarge by comment,* modestly but firmly expressing his sentiments. So great a man as Dr. Beattie has thrown a damp upon teaching children the doctrines of Christianity, "because," he says, "they cannot understand them." "Great men are not always wise;" and here is a proof of it: for a more mischievous and censurable sentiment cannot be uttered. According to this logic grown people must not attempt any thing upon the doctrine of the Trinity, because they cannot comprehend the subject!

As the above sentiment of Dr. B. has spread itself far

* See last Division of these Lectures.

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and wide, and is acted upon very extensively, but especially in our public boarding schools; and as our Sunday-schools are not out of danger; I beg leave to ask the philosophers of Dr. Beattie's school, What is it that it is desirable should grow up in the minds of youth, and pervade the whole life? Is it sacred truth? Then plant the germ of truth early; fix it in the mind; there let it grow into more perfect knowledge, and strengthen into sound principles of action. I do not expect the child to know what it learns: I do not myself know many things which yet I am aiming at; but the elements of knowledge must be previously imbibed before good effects can be expected. "Timothy from a child knew the Holy Scriptures." How did he know them? Just as a child could know them. When did the use of this knowledge appear? When Paul wrote to him in subsequent life; when pressing upon us innumerable requirements of skill, in which nothing but Scripture can direct us with safety. Away, therefore, with such sentiments as Beattie's in this matter.

It is astonishing that this wise age should blunder upon that old well-marked rock of forming character upon morals, and encourage the delusion of acquiring doctrines afterwards. Doctrines must first be acquired; and morals are to be established upon those doctrines which form them their best motives and firmest support.

No. 2. Mr. Simeon, Appendix to Horæ Homileticæ, 657, gives us also an example in which the second part of the subject turns upon our Topic. The text is 1 Pet. ii. 13—17: "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man," &c. The sermon is the substance of what the author preached on the coronation of George IV. He commences very properly by observing,

The great duty of a Christian minister is to exalt the Saviour, and to call men to submit to *his* government. But we cannot truly submit to Christ, unless we yield obedience to those laws which relate to our conduct in civil life,

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as well as those which refer to the inmost workings of our souls towards God; and we should be wanting in our duty, as Christian pastors, if we did not avail ourselves of suitable occasions for opening to you a subject of such importance. Consider,

I. Our duty in relation to civil government.

It is called in the text an "ordinance of man:" and so it is as far as relates to the particular *form* of government established in any kingdom. Yet, in its original appointment, civil government proceeds from God himself: Rom. xiii. 1. Our subjection to it is therefore a part of the duty we owe to God, and hence we are required to submit to the ordinances of man "for the Lord's sake." See Rom. xiii. 1, 2, and 5.

II. The grounds and reasons of it. These are,

1. Its being altogether of God's appointment. The power exercised by earthly rulers is God's authority delegated to men. It is not man, therefore, but God, whom we are called to obey: Numb. xvi. 11; 1 Sam. viii. 7; Rom. xiii. 4. We are to "submit" ourselves to man; "for so is the will of God."

2. Its conduciveness to the public welfare. Though authority may not always be exerted aright, yet it is ordained for the public good—"the punishment of evil doers, and the benefit of those who do well." Suppose the laws of the land to be suspended, and every one left to follow the bent of his will without fear and without restraint, what misery would soon pervade the kingdom! what scenes of rapine, violence, and cruelty would the country present!

3. Its tendency to recommend religion. God has special respect to this: it is "his will" that we should fulfil this duty, "that by well doing we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." This should be an object near to the heart of all the Lord's people; and they should labour to accomplish it "for the Lord's sake."

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III. The manner in which it should be performed.

1. With integrity of mind.

2. With an harmonious attention to all other duties.

This last subdivision is very judicious, as affording an opportunity for entering on topics of higher and more momentous interest than those which refer to civil government. The text and the occasion sufficiently justify Mr. Simeon's remarks; and he brings the matter fairly before us. The language is temperate and judicious, and offers no offence to the high or low party; this accords with my own sentiments. I would not have ministers abandon the right of private judgment, or the exercise of any constitutional privileges; but I beg leave to say that the high character of the preacher of the gospel should never merge in that of a politician.

No. 3. The following is also from Simeon, Horæ Homileticæ, No. 1079. 2 Thess. iii. 5: "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God," &c.

I. The objects of the apostle's wish.

II. The grounds or reasons of it.—Many considerations might be mentioned, but they may be comprised under two heads.

1. The attainment of such a state would be conducive to their present happiness.

2. It was indispensably necessary to their future welfare.

No. 4. The following outline is introduced more on account of its subject than for the sake of adding to a list of examples already sufficiently numerous for our purpose. Walker, vol. iii., p. 213, on family worship; 2 Sam. vi. 20: David's return to bless his household.

I. Prove the indispensable duty of family worship.

1. From the light of nature.—The heathen had their household gods; Laban's were of this kind, and in the British Museum there are some hundreds of these to be seen.

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From the patriarchal state—Abram, Job, &c., had family worship.

3. In the Jewish state we have Joshua, David, &c.

3. In the New Testament we have examples of salutations to persons who had their families ordered in church order.

II. The grounds or reasons of this observance.

1. Families are natural societies, formed originally by God, and held together by his providence, and they must have subjects in common for prayer and praise.

2. As God is the founder, so he is likewise the gracious benefactor, of our families: hence the argument.

3. So also we have family sins to deplore.

III. Its advantages.

1. It promotes our temporal interests, brings the family into a dutiful behaviour, and upon dutiful behaviour much of prosperity and comfort depends.

2. It promotes spirituality of mind, checks the opening of vice, and carries us well into the sabbath or Lord's day.

3. It is a happy means of promoting the salvation of the family.

4. It coincides with all the purposes of our church establishments: pious families feed the church—make its best and most useful members.

Now as public instructors we must be frequently insisting on this point, and it will be proper to endeavour to remove the timidity and the difficulties which heads of families often feel in making a beginning. I will mention my experience in reference to this point. I think no poor creature ever suffered more repugnance to it than myself. O what a conflict between fears and duty! how could I begin? what should I say in prayer with my family? However, after months of sinful hesitation, I at last resolved that at all events, if spared, I would commence on the first day of the new year. As the time came my

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agony increased. The evening and the hour approached. I could hardly have felt more at any awful calamity, so was I terrified: but I had vowed, and I could not go back. Well, we all kneeled together, I had not a thought or a word to say when I kneeled, but still attempting to open my mouth, God gave me both thoughts and words enough, blessed be his name! And, even independently of the sense of obligation, I would not now neglect the continuance for all that the world could supply. This is stated as matter of encouragement. I look upon mine as an extreme case: it was an excessive weakness—in part a constitutional infirmity. It is indeed a solemn thing to call upon God; but, as Christians, we are encouraged to recollect that he is the "God of all grace," and that by approaching him in the exercise of family and social as well as private prayer, we are rendering a required service, which he will both acknowledge and bless, doing for us infinitely "above what we can ask or think."

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# LECTURE XXIII.

"Every new author upon a subject, however little original in other respects, contributes some slight addition to the mass of probabilities."—Vide *Truths of Religion, by Jas. Douglas, Esq.**

## SUPPLEMENT TO TOPIC XIX.

### GROUNDS, &c.

Notwithstanding the importance of this Topic in point of rank, it might very safely have been dismissed in the preceding Lecture, because it required little exposition, and, for the purpose of illustration, the examples there given are sufficiently numerous. If, however, an apology be necessary for detaining the reader's attention, I hope it will be found in my anxiety to supply, as far as possible, every thing that can contribute to his benefit; and, as it is highly important that every preacher of the gospel should be familiar with the *grounds* of our common faith, the consideration of this subject may not be deemed much out of place under this Topic. Some remarks have already been made on detached parts of the evidences of Christianity, and several pertinent extracts have been introduced in different parts of the work. But it appeared to me that some little service might be rendered by stating, in a connected manner, some of those facts and circumstances on which the truth of the gospel is founded; and that though the

* This work, and its proper associate, "Errors regarding Religion," by the same esteemed author, are of very great value.

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facts collected may be few in number, briefly discussed, and perhaps imperfectly put together, yet my intention might be favourably received. Still I would recommend every student of divinity to pursue the subject if possible in its more extended details, by studying such works as are of a more standard and acknowledged character, which ought to form a part of every Sunday-school library, and be recommended by every preacher to the perusal of his people. The subject itself may sometimes with propriety be thrown into the form of a sermon, adopting such texts as 1 Pet. v. 12: "This is the true grace of God in which we stand," where the word grace is put for gospel; or 2 Pet. i. 16: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables," &c.; or any of like general import.

Although it is true that the nations and communities which are blessed with pure Christianity are highly advanced in intellectual improvement above those that are without it;—that our religion has been professed and honoured by the great and the good in every stage of its existence;—that many hundreds of thousands have sealed their testimony of its truth with their blood;—that a still greater number have been supported by it through all manner of trials, and have died in the fullest assurance of its validity;—and that every individual who lives under its influence possesses in himself an evidence which is to him complete and irresistible, agreeably with the declaration, "He that believeth hath the witness in himself;"—yet these considerations do not afford sufficient evidence to satisfy the sceptical part of mankind, and it is fit, both on their account and our own, that we should give better reasons for the hope that is in us than are contained in the above statements. It is not my intention to enter at large into the body of evidence on which the truth of revelation is grounded; but I shall endeavour to show, as fully as my limits will permit, that the peculiar circumstances under which Christianity originally obtained credence were of

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such a kind as to exclude the possibility of forgery; that the Christian faith, if founded on falsehood, must necessarily have perished in the age in which it originated, or rather, that it never could have been received at all even by the more credulous, much less by vigilant adversaries, who were men of reason and reflection;—from which it will follow, as a necessary consequence, that the establishment of Christianity in the world *under such circumstances*, satisfactorily proves its divine origin.

It will be admitted that no nation or country (or even any individual, in his senses) could ever be so credulous as to believe that a certain course of events occurred under their own immediate notice, when no such events had taken place; yet this will appear to have been precisely the fact with reference to the introduction of Christianity in Judea eighteen hundred years ago, the first promulgators of which appealed to their countrymen as witnesses of the principal facts on which it is founded. Every system of imposture has its origin involved in obscurity. Such was the religion of Ephesus; Acts xix. 35. At some time or other, nobody knows how or when, the image of Diana fell down from Jupiter! Such is the origin of Ephesian worship; and this is a good sample of heathen superstition. The ancient Britons followed the Druidical religion; but who ever heard of any authentic origin which could be referred to as proving it came from God? But the circumstantial and explicit accounts of the origin of our religion are such as to render the supposition of imposture altogether unreasonable, if not absurd; for if Christianity had been introduced in a manner different from that which is recorded, and if the events connected with the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Christ, to which the first preachers appealed as well-known facts, had never really occurred, how was it possible for the falsehood to escape detection? Infidels have indeed attempted to involve the origin of Christianity in suspicion, with what degree of rationality may be esti-

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mated from the following: Volney, a French writer, some few years ago asserted that the establishment of Christianity arose out of the following circumstances: "The great mediator and first judge [of the Jews] was expected, and his advent desired, that an end might be put to the Jewish calamities. This was so much the subject of conversation that some one was said to have seen him; a rumour of this kind was all that was wanting to establish a general certainty; and the popular report became a demonstrated fact. The imaginary being was realized; and, all the circumstances of mythological tradition being in some measure connected with this phantom, the result was an authentic history, which henceforth it was blasphemy to doubt!" Since, however, the Jews, as a people, have ever been the inveterate opponents of Christianity, is it not absolutely absurd to suppose that they were concerned in fabricating or supporting such a history?

Our own country has furnished examples of infidelity quite as illustrious. Mr. Taylor has not scrupled to assert that there never was such a person as Jesus Christ. The following is a specimen of the reasoning which he considers sufficient to overturn all the evidence derived from testimony. "The persons of whom they [the Scriptures of the New Testament] treat, never existed: because demoniacs, devils, ghosts, angels, hobgoblins (see Acts xix. 15), persons who had once been dead, who could walk on water, ride in the air, &c., such as Satan and Jesus Christ, are the persons of whom these Scriptures treat: and that such persons never existed is demonstrable,

"1. From the utter incongruity of such figments with the established laws of sound reason.

"2. From the total absence of all historical reference to their existence.

"3. From innumerable passages of these Scriptures themselves, which fully admit the merely visionary hypostasis of their fabulous hero. See Luke ix. 29; Mark

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ix. 2; Luke xxiv. 31; 1 John v. 6; and innumerable other passages, in perfect accordance with the true and genuine gospels of the most primitive Christians, which taught that he was ninety-eight miles tall and twenty-four miles broad, that he was not crucified at all, that he was never born at all, that by faith only are we saved, &c., all equally indicative that Christianity had no evidence at all, but was a matter of mere conceit, fancy, or superstition, from first to last.

"That the events which they relate never happened is demonstrable (further than as a consequence of the preceding proposition) from the fact that some, many, or all of these events had been previously related of the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome, and more especially of the Indian idol Chrishna, whose religion, with less alteration than time and translations have made in the Jewish Scriptures, may be traced in every dogma and every ceremony of the evangelical mythology."

The cause that rests on such distorted representations of facts, and such plain and palpable falsehoods for support, certainly carries internal evidence of its weakness; and no intelligent person who is at all conversant with history will be in danger of being misled by such means. But as these bold assertions, however false, may stagger the illiterate, and afford to the profane some relief from the remonstrances of conscience and the fear of future condemnation, it is proper for the preachers of the gospel to guard the weak in judgment and experience against them.

The cause at issue stands thus:—It is asserted, on the one hand, that there never was such a person as Jesus Christ, or that what is ascribed to him in the New Testament is false; and that, taking off the sanction which time has conferred on the belief of it, and reducing the value derived from authority and priestly craft to its proper standard, the whole story is unworthy the belief of sensible men. On the other hand it is asserted, that the religion of

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Christ could never have been established had not the things which are stated respecting him been true.

Now, whether there was such a person as Jesus, and what were the doctrines which he taught, are inquiries relative to facts, and, like every other question of this nature, must be determined by historic testimony. There are fables, and there are real histories; and the distinction between the one and the other is generally pretty strongly marked. Whether there ever was such a person as Hercules, and whether the things ascribed to him were true or false, we decide from a reference to history; and having ascertained that every history which bears the marks of authenticity is silent upon the subject, we conclude that Hercules was a creature of the poets, and nothing more; for had the descriptions given of him by the poets corresponded with any real character, historians could not have failed to mention him. But, on the contrary, if it be inquired whether there ever was such a person as William the Conqueror, we determine in the affirmative without any fear of mistake, because his name and his deeds are recorded in the authenticated part of our English history. That he really had a bloody conflict with Harold, and overcame him at the battle of Hastings, is rendered as certain, notwithstanding the lapse of time, as though it had transpired within our own memory, upon the same principle as it will be evident to future generations that the battle of Waterloo, and the defeat of Buonaparte, &c., were real occurrences. The same rule of judgment may be applied to the solution of our present inquiry. The things which are stated of Christ and his immediate followers are such as could not have failed to excite the opposition of the Jews; they are declared not to have been done in a corner, but publicly; yet the Jews never made any attempt to deny them. It is true they disputed the divinity of Christ, and denied his claims to the Messiahship; but respecting his birth, parentage, public teaching, and death, there was

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no controversy. The gospel histories are by them uncontradicted to the present day; the divine character and mission of Jesus alone being objected to on their part. These gospel histories mark with peculiar precision the time, place, and peculiar circumstances attending the birth of Christ, informing us it was during that part of the reign of Cæsar Augustus when Cyrenius was governor of Syria (Luke ii. 1, 2); that it was in Bethlehem, in the days of Herod the king; that certain wise men, being apprised of his birth* by the appearance of a miraculous star, journeyed from the east to Judea in order to worship him; that Herod, alarmed by the apprehension of a rival, assembled the Jewish sanhedrim, and desired them to search the prophetic records for some intimation that might throw light upon the subject. The result of this inquiry was, that Bethlehem was announced to be the place of the Messiah's birth; and this agreed with the fact respecting Jesus, which was brought about by an extraordinary edict of the Roman emperor, in consequence of which the mother and reputed father of Jesus were obliged to sojourn at Bethlehem at the precise period of his birth. The history tells us that Herod conceived the plan of murdering the infant, and for this purpose insidiously requested the magi to let him know the house that contained the stranger, under the pretence of desiring to worship him. Having been frustrated in this design he became more enraged, and, that he might make sure of destroying his supposed rival, sent and slew all the young children that could be found in Bethlehem and its vicinity. We are further told that, by a divine intimation, Jesus was preserved from this danger, being conducted by night into Egypt, where he remained till the death of Herod; that Joseph then returned, as

* That a mighty deliverer was at this period very generally expected, is a fact which is well attested; and even Volney admits it in reference to the Jews, and builds his hypothesis upon it. But how is this fact to be accounted for except on the ground of prophetic intimation?

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directed, into the land of Israel, but hearing that Archelaus reigned in the stead of Herod, he was afraid, and eventually turned northward towards Galilee, and dwelt in Nazareth.

Now, not to mention the minute agreement of the above facts with the prophetic writings received and preserved by the enemies of Christianity, I only insist that they are placed above suspicion of falsehood by the public nature of the facts themselves, and the clear and explicit manner in which the time and other circumstances are pointed out; for if they had been false, how could such statements obtain currency, when every one must have possessed the means of confuting them? and how can we account for the fact that those who thought it their interest to prevent the belief of Christianity in its first promulgation, never pretended to deny them?

But the facts which I have recited from the evangelical history are still further corroborated by their conformity with profane and independent history. For example, the respective characters of Herod and of Archelaus are not described by the evangelists. They give merely a simple narrative of facts; yet these facts are such as to imply that the character of the men to whom they referred must have been exactly such as it is now known to have been. It is very evident, from Josephus, that the transactions which are mentioned respecting Herod were in perfect accordance with his character. He was always in fear for the stability of his throne, and anxious to pry into futurity, that he might discover whether it was likely to endure. While Herod was yet a boy, we are told by Josephus, Manahem an Essene had foretold that he was destined to be a king. "When he was actually advanced to that dignity, and in the plenitude of his power, he sent for Manahem, and inquired of him how long he should reign. Manahem did not tell him the precise period; whereupon he questioned him further, whether he should reign ten years or not? He



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replied, "Yes, twenty; nay, thirty years;" but he did not assign a limit to the continuance of his empire. Herod was satisfied with these answers; and, giving Manahem his hand, dismissed him, and from that time never ceased to honour all the Essenes."—*Antiq.* xv. 10, § 5.

With respect to Archelaus, we are only told by the evangelist that when Joseph "heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither." But if Archelaus had not been notorious for his cruelty very soon indeed after his accession to the throne, the precipitate conduct of Joseph to avoid him is altogether unaccountable. The fact is, that at the very first passover after Herod's death, even before Archelaus had yet time to set out for Rome to obtain the ratification of his authority from the emperor, he was guilty of an act of outrage and bloodshed, under circumstances above all others fitted to make it generally and immediately known. One of the last deeds of his father Herod had been to put to death Judas and Matthias, two persons who had instigated some young men to pull down a golden eagle which Herod had fixed over the gate of the temple, contrary, as they conceived, to the law of Moses. The hapless fate of these martyrs to the law excited great commiseration at the passover which ensued. The parties, however, who uttered their lamentations aloud were silenced by Archelaus, the new king, in the following manner:— "He sent out all the troops against them, and ordered the horsemen to prevent those who had their tents outside the temple from rendering assistance to those who were within it, and to put to death such as might escape from the foot. Three thousand men did these cavalry slay; the rest betook themselves for safety to the neighbouring mountains. Then Archelaus commanded proclamation to be made that they should all retire to their own homes. So they went away, and left the festival, out of fear lest somewhat worse should ensue."—*Antiq.* xvii. 9, § 3. Mr. Blunt, in his "Veracity

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of the Evangelists," commenting on this fact, observes:— "We must bear in mind that, at the passover, Jews from all parts of the world were assembled; so that any event which occurred at Jerusalem, during that great feast, would be speedily reported on their return to the countries where they dwelt. Such a massacre, therefore, at such a season, would at once stamp the character of Archelaus. The fear of him would naturally enough spread itself wherever a Jew was to be found; and, in fact, so well remembered was this, his first essay at governing the people, that several years afterwards it was brought against him with great effect, on his appearance before Cæsar at Rome. It is the more probable that this act of cruelty inspired Joseph with his dread of Archelaus, because that prince could not have been much known before he came to the throne; never having had any public employment, or indeed future destination, like his half-brother Antipater, whereby he might have discovered himself to the nation at large."

To the evidence arising from this conformity (which I consider of no small weight) we may add testimonies of a more direct nature. It is well known that the early apologists for Christianity, in their disputes with the Gentiles, were accustomed to appeal to "Acts of Pilate," which were then accessible, for the truth of the principal facts respecting the life and death of Christ. Thus Justin Martyr, in his first apology for the Christians, which was presented to the emperor Antoninus Pius and the senate of Rome about the year 140, having mentioned the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and some of its attendant circumstances, adds: "And that these things were so done, you may know from the Acts made in the time of Pontius Pilate." Tertullian, in his Apology for Christianity, about the year 200, after speaking of our Saviour's crucifixion and resurrection, and his appearances to the disciples, and ascension into heaven in the sight of the same disciples, who were ordained by him to publish the



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gospel over the world, thus proceeds: "Of all these things relating to Christ, Pilate himself, in his conscience already a Christian, sent an account to Tiberius, then emperor." In the same apology he thus relates the proceedings of Tiberius on receiving this information: "There was an ancient decree that no one should be received for a deity, unless he was first approved by the senate Tiberius, in whose time the Christian name [or religion] had its rise, having received from Palestine in Syria an account of such things as manifested the truth of his [Christ's] divinity, proposed to the senate that he should be enrolled among the Roman gods, and gave his own prerogative vote in favour of the motion. But the senate," without whose consent no deification could take place, "rejected it, because the emperor himself had declined the same honour. Nevertheless, the emperor persisted in his opinion, and threatened punishment to the accusers of the Christians. Search your own commentaries (or public writings): you will there find that Nero was the first who raged with the imperial sword against this sect, when rising most at Rome." These testimonies of Justin and Tertullian are taken from public apologies for the Christian religion, which were presented either to the emperor and senate of Rome, or to magistrates of public authority and great distinction in the Roman empire; and it is surely incredible that such writers would have made such appeals, especially to the very persons in whose custody these monuments were, had they not been fully satisfied of their existence and contents.

Heathen writers, whose works have been preserved, afford many passages in corroboration of the leading facts of the gospel history. Tacitus, without intending to serve the cause of Christianity, attests the existence of Jesus Christ, his public execution under the administration of Pontius Pilate, the temporary check which this gave to the progress of his religion, its revival a short time after his

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death, and rapid progress over the land of Judea and in the metropolis of the Roman empire.—*Tacit. Ann.*, lib. xv., c. 44. Celsus, who wrote in the latter part of the second century, and was one of the bitterest opponents of Christianity, speaks of the founder of the Christian religion as having lived but a very few years before his time, and mentions the principal facts of the gospel history relative to Jesus Christ, declaring that he had copied the account from the writings of the evangelists. He quotes these books and makes extracts from them, as being composed by the disciples and companions of Jesus, and under the names which they now bear. He takes notice particularly of his being born of a virgin; his being worshipped by the magi; his flight into Egypt, and the slaughter of the infants; his baptism by John; his being accounted a prophet by his disciples; and of his foretelling who should betray him, as well as the circumstances of his death and resurrection. He allows that Christ was considered by his disciples as a divine person; and notices all the circumstances attending his crucifixion, and his appearing to his disciples afterwards. He acknowledges the miracles wrought by Jesus Christ, by which he engaged great multitudes to adhere to him as the Messiah. That these miracles were really performed he *never* disputes or denies, but ascribes them to the magic art, which, he says, Christ learned in Egypt.

To these might be added numerous other testimonies. Indeed it has been well observed that "it is not an extravagant assertion that, if the New Testament and all other Christian writings could be blotted out of existence, we have, in the unquestionably authentic writings of ancient heathens and Jews—decided enemies to the Christian religion—documents sufficient to establish *all the primary facts* on which that religion rests: namely, the life and death of Jesus at the precise period which the gospels assert; the extensive propagation of his religion at the time and in the countries which are stated in the New Testament; its re-

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ception by immense multitudes of persons who had the complete means of ascertaining whether the sensible facts on which it was founded had actually taken place or not; the moral excellence of their characters; and the sacrifices of property, liberty, earthly happiness, and life itself, by which they proved the sincerity of their belief in those, *not opinions and ideas*, but *broad facts*, of which men's eyes and ears were the witnesses. From the same source, also, we deduce the fullest evidence that the earliest enemies to Christianity, with power, money, learning, influence, and every other advantage *except truth*, on their side, never attempted to deny the existence of Jesus, or the leading circumstances of his history, and they even admitted the reality of his miracles."—*Dr. J. P. Smith's Answer to the Manifesto of the Christian Evidence Society.*

I must also be permitted to observe what a striking instance of divine providence is legible in this,—I might call it a wonderful event—that the subjugation of the Jews should entwine national histories together, so that the history of Jesus and that of the Herods—nay, of the Roman empire, should coalesce, and thus bring into our possession a species of testimony attainable by no other means. We may indeed safely assert that no memorials which were ever preserved of any past events have a thousandth part of the same title to be trusted as those in the history of Jesus; and our sceptics must demolish this foundation, resting on Roman as well as Jewish records, before they can advance to blow the trumpet of victory, or destroy our hopes of that "life and immortality brought to light by the gospel."

It may be objected, that no certain conclusion can be drawn in favour of Christianity from the statements of the preceding pages, because much of a fabulous character may be engrafted upon a few leading facts of history and that this has been often done. Let us examine this point.

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It is admitted that the truth may, under some circumstances, be so corrupted by admixture with tradition and falsehood as to involve the inquirer in perplexity. By a long series of innovations the primitive religion of Noah degenerated into universal polytheism. By the operation of similar causes the religion of Moses became corrupted, while the external rites (the shell of truth) were retained. Thus also the Christian religion, as confirmed by Constantine, degenerated into the present corrupt system of the Romish church. But the religion of Christ, as seen in the writings of the evangelists, is above suspicion of admixture. If these writers had been inclined to add any thing to the plain *facts* which came under their own notice, and to indulge an inventive faculty, a fair opportunity presented itself while Jesus was domiciliated at Nazareth. Here in this secluded spot no observers, no listeners, were near. Secure against contradiction, the space of twenty-five or twenty-six years might have been filled up with the marvellous; but it is worthy of remark that even the truth of that space of time is not given. The history of the evangelists is altogether of a public character. Whatever Jesus said or did in the secret chamber or the recesses of Galilee, is to be left out of his narrative; but if during that twenty-five years Jesus goes up to Jerusalem, and surprises the doctors of the temple by his wisdom, this event, which was capable of public corroboration, is to be historized, with all its attendant circumstances. During that long period nothing else is recorded of him but that he was subject to his mother and reputed father; and that he increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man.

After passing over, in almost total silence, the events of twenty-six years, the gospel history is resumed to introduce the preaching of John the Baptist. His early history was contemporary with that of Jesus, to whom he was related. He also, as well as Jesus, passed his early life in seclusion.

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It is only said of him that "the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts until the day of his showing unto Israel." There, apart from the world, and under the tuition of heaven, he was initiated into the principles of divine wisdom, and prepared for his future course of self-denying labour. Here, as in the former case, the veil of privacy is thrown over his early history. But the moment John commences a course of public action, open to universal observation, the history of the gospel is resumed, and the events recorded with all the needful circumstances of time, place, matter, and manner, the effects and consequences. In short the true rules of testimony are here strictly regarded. This is laying a proper foundation, and has more meaning than the mere pomp of words; and indeed many true histories are injured for want of proper data; but here the record begins: "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high-priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness; and he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance, as declared by the prophet Esaias, and great multitudes came to his baptism." Here are a multitude of witnesses. John's preaching was of the nervous kind, perfectly free from flattery and even somewhat severe; but he was a "burning and a shining light," and he afterwards fell a victim to his faithfulness. A corrupt court and a faithful minister of religion seldom long agree together: if faithful doctrine does not reform the court, the court will sacrifice the preacher of righteousness. We find however by the history that his preaching created a very strong sensation in the public mind. John had great multitudes of hearers, and was regarded as a prophet; Herod received him as such, "heard him gladly," and "did many things" en-

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joined by him. The Baptist's fame reached Jerusalem; the Jews there sent an embassy to him to know the import of his mission. Now I say that it was utterly impossible for an evangelist to tell this story in the face of the Jewish nation and the court of Herod, if it had not been true; but to confirm the truth of the history, many of the priests and Levites came to his baptism. About this time Jesus himself came from Nazareth to be baptized of John; and here Jesus and John recognize and acknowledge each other. Jesus received baptism at the hands of John, and John points out Jesus as the true Messiah, to whom he was but a servant and forerunner. "Behold," he says, "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world!" John i. 29. I preach repentance; he taketh away the sins repented of. And very soon after Jesus assumed his own ministry.

This was a very remarkable era, and stands so connected with the then state of the Jewish nation that it is necessary to notice what this state was.

However uneasy the Jewish people had been under Herod the Great, it became infinitely worse after his death. The tyranny of Archelaus had provoked such ferments and petty rebellions in the nation, that, to terminate these disorders, the Roman emperor determined to put an end to the existing government that had long been held over the country, and to govern the nation under the form of Roman provinces, to the still greater grief and disquietude of the Jews.

This measure, which was carried into execution, appears appears to have originated, not in any premeditated design of the Roman emperor, but in the necessity of the case. The cruelties of Archelaus, and the unparalleled disturbances that prevailed in every civil department of Judea, rendered the presence of a Roman military and Roman governor needful. In Josephus we every where meet with accounts of open acts of violence or secret workings of



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plots, conspiracies, and frauds; the laws ineffectual or very partially observed, and very wretchedly administered; oppression on the part of the rulers; among the people faction, discontent, sedition, tumult; robbers infesting the very streets and most public places of resort, wandering about in arms, thirsting for blood no less than spoil, assembling in troops to the dismay of more peaceable citizens, and with difficulty put down by military force.

Such is our view of the condition of Judea as collected from Josephus. The language of the New Testament agrees with it in some oblique manner; for the evangelists were not historians of the times strictly. Hence the parable of the good Samaritan, of a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and falling among thieves (Luke x. 30)—of husbandmen murdering the messengers of a landowner—of an unjust judge—of a steward that made free with his master's property—of the Son of man coming as a thief in the night—of a kingdom, &c., divided against itself—of the folly of laying by treasure, as the thieves might take it, &c. And, when it is considered that all our Lord's language had reference to passing occurrences, we see, upon the whole, what was the state of the Jews about the time of our Lord's ministry, by which we form a chain of circumstances to prove the credibility of the gospel history.

The national pride of the Jews was wounded to the quick by the new species of control now exercised over them, and they were disposed to catch at a shadow, if it looked like a deliverer from the Roman yoke. We now arrive at the conflict between Jesus and the Jews as to the truth of his Messiahship, whether he really was one of the ordinary race of mankind or the Son of God. This conflict is frequent in the first three gospels, but is most prominent in that of John, where the disputations are recorded at considerable length. To a superficial reader these frequent collisions may seem of small importance, but they are capable of affording most essential evidence of the truth of

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the gospel; they form that part of our *circumstances* upon which the evidence of Christianity rests. They knew that the time was come as prophesied by Jacob and Daniel: Gen. xlix. 10; Dan. ix. 24. A Messiah, therefore, to meet their wishes, having but power enough, and whom they dare follow, would have been hailed with acclamation; nor would they have examined very scrupulously about his other qualifications, or his very exact correspondence with their notion of the prophecies. So far every thing was favourable for the reception of the Messiah, had he been quite of their mind. John's ministry had raised such admiration that the people mused in their hearts whether he was not the identical personage: Luke iii. 15. There was also the devout few of retired habits "waiting for the consolation of Israel," as Simeon, Anna, &c.; so that every ear and every eye was open to hear and see the great Deliverer, and John positively declared that Jesus was he. John, whom every body heard and every body received, and in "whose light they rejoiced," identified Jesus as the Messiah, even when he might have retained every degree of popularity to himself.

It must be further considered that, although there were such general expectations, yet the particular views of the expectants differed materially. The humble and the pious looked for a spiritual deliverer, agreeably to early announcement that he should "save his people from their sins." Some of these again had a mixed notion upon the subject, that the Messiah's character was both spiritual and temporal. Such opinion the twelve disciples long entertained. But the Jewish sanhedrim, and that part of the population that was under their influence, could not be satisfied with any thing less than a hero of revolution: and a hero indeed must he be that could overthrow the Roman power in the zenith of its glory. The Jews were well enough inclined to examine the prophecies for such a character, and to follow any leader who had but the

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shadow of a pretension to identify himself with their notions of prophecy. Perhaps they would have excused the mean birth of Jesus, if they could have hoped that his sun would arise into brightness, if such improvement had been discovered as would have allowed them rationally to flock to his standard, and blow the trumpet of war; for it must be remembered that they were by no means a dastardly, pusillanimous people; they were ready enough to "buckle the shield and handle the spear." But how great was their disappointment in Jesus! He was totally of a wrong make and character, and could only be recognized at all as the Messiah by a very different class of prophecies to those which the Jewish rulers were fondly wont to read. Being aware of this situation of things, he met their objections in the very opening of his ministry, by identifying himself with a prophecy of Isaiah; Luke iv. 18: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," &c. His conduct corresponded with this spiritual character. He selected for his followers the poor fishermen of Galilee. He pronounced blessings, not upon warriors, upon the rich and the noble, but upon the humble and meek. He did not, in one instance, wait upon any of the higher classes of society, or attempt to explain the apparent discrepancy. This was in the eyes of the ruling party a very galling offence, and they were even now ready to say, as they afterwards did, "Away with such a fellow from the earth!" Here we see the popular notion running in one direction, and the Saviour's heavenly intentions in another. Meet they could not. If this people could have been brought to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, in the first place, instead of the recovery of their ancient glory, all had been right; but, as things were, a reconciliation of views was impossible.

Now did such a state of things and of public opinion suit with such a character as Jesus, when he began his mi-

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nistry? Not in the least; and it is by this very circumstance that the New Testament stands clear of invention; for had the New Testament relation given a course of things all running in one channel, wherein there was no eye of jealousy to suspect or hand of opposition raised, the men of this age might have thought as they pleased, though it might have been true notwithstanding such amicable accordances; but as things stood at that time, and recurring to those circumstances, the Jews in their disappointed rage quarrelled even with the benevolence of Jesus, and the benefits he actually did confer upon the sick, lame, and blind. They treated rudely and impudently the most demonstrative proofs of his divinity, and most convincing arguments that he was the Messiah, and threw dirt on all his works and character: "He hath a devil, why hear ye him?" while every accession of popularity, which his miracles and doctrines gained to him, brought a more than equal accession of malignity in the rulers, which grew to such a pitch that Nicodemus, a noble example of a better disposition, dared not consult with Jesus respecting his mission but in the dead of night.

It has often been remarked that the cause of truth always obtains strength by opposition, and it is to mark that opposition that I so much insist upon this part of the history. The common people in the country, it appears, were so elated with Jesus that they resolved to make him king, which of course was resisted; and in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem his popularity became so great, by the resurrection of Lazarus, that the sanhedrim were assembled to deliberate upon it. Something, say they, must immediately be done. "What do we?" or what shall we do? for this man doeth many miracles to confirm his doctrines and increase his adherents; and though he does not possess power enough, or inclination prompt enough, to save us from the Romans, yet enough to provoke them to greater hostility. If we let him alone, it is not improbable

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that we may be banished to some remote region, for the Romans may be induced to "take away both our place and nation." Under these apprehensions they meditated the death of Jesus, but dared not attempt it; "for they feared the people:" a full proof of the turbulent state of the times; they were rulers in name only.

One would have thought that these wise men, seeing the proofs of a heavenly mission daily disclosing themselves in the character and person of Jesus, might have given the subject of his Messiahship a closer examination; but they were entangled in their own counsels, and they wanted what it was impossible to obtain—a Messiah to their own mind. Jesus did nothing for them, as they thought, but rather diminished than increased their popularity with the people. Their authority seemed to totter and shake to the very foundation; and they were in danger of being brought into contempt. They had ecclesiastical power still in their hands, though the Romans had the civil; but the doctrines of Jesus tended to subvert even this residue. These pointed to a spiritual rather than a worldly or carnal economy, and tended to superinduce a new order of things over that of Moses, by which they held all their honours and all their authority.*

We have seen that the reality of the person and character of Jesus form part of a regular history, having time, place, and circumstances to substantiate every thing; that this history is not purely Jewish, but that it is interwoven with more general historical and well-known facts: in all which imposture was impossible. We have seen that John the Baptist, a man universally acknowledged, bears testi-

* The Jews could not much mistake Christ's words. The subversion of the Mosaic institutions was pretty plainly intimated in the sentence, "The law and the prophets prophesied *until John*; since that time the *kingdom of God is preached*." This was a bold declaration. He was come to make an entire change in their religion. It was saying, in effect, You have obeyed the ceremonies of the law, and you have honoured the admonitions of the prophets for 1500 years; henceforth a new authority is to be paramount.

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mony to Christ as the Messiah; and that, although Jesus was rejected in that character by the higher classes of the Jews, yet his miracles and doctrines were too conspicuous for privacy and concealment, and his popularity increased; that he assumed to himself the character of the Saviour of the world; and, what is very material, that every point he asserted was *strongly opposed, and severely canvassed and scrutinized,* but not subverted. This is all that we are solicitous about; for here it is demonstratively proved that the religion of Jesus was not a forgery, for it was established over a mighty opposition. It was not as the Koran, which was written in privacy, and then propagated publicly and by the sword; but bore a nearer resemblance to the religion of Moses, which grew out of the circumstances and historical facts of the Israelitish people, conducted through the opposition of enemies, and ended in the final triumph over them.

It is also worthy of remark that in passing over the various incidents of our Lord's life and public character, and that of his disciples, we cannot but see the utmost impartiality of representation and faithfulness of record. The evangelists relate their facts with the simplicity of children, and appear not to suspect that they could or would, in future ages, be discredited. All the weaknesses and faults of the disciples are set down in full dimensions, as well as the faults of their adversaries. Though the different evangelists take different views of things, yet in no instance does the account of one of them contradict that of the other; but, on the contrary, when closely examined and put together, afford mutual corroboration. In delineation of character, how exactly true to nature! That of the Jews; their inveterate prejudices, their superstitions, their unbelief of what they ought to believe, and their extraordinary credulity of the most silly stories and traditions. This representation remains true to the present day: the high spirit of their character is indeed broken down by

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their overthrow, but in all the particulars just named any person can ascertain the close resemblance of their present character with that which the evangelists have drawn. Nay, the general character of human nature itself, in all its diversified feelings, and in persons of all ranks, cannot be more correctly described. Here we see how prejudices are subdued by affliction; a ruler of a synagogue supplicating our Lord's compassion in favour of his diseased daughter. We see, on the contrary, minds unsubdued by affliction, but nurtured in riches, are the most inimical to the reception of truth, while the poor and the afflicted humbly seek relief: and are not the same things manifest in the present day? We see the same versatility now every day that is marked in the gospels, in the multitude hailing Christ with hosannas one day, and almost the next vociferating against him. In the treachery and baseness of Judas we see a picture of the same kind, in a man's enemies being too often those of his own house. The like divisions in families on religious accounts; the same jealousies and suspicions against any member of a family who is more conscientious than the others; the same unfeeling behaviour towards an erring brother as the righteous Pharisees had against the sinners; the same fondness both then and now for the chief seats of the synagogues; the same ingratitude in human nature now exists towards God as we find in the ten lepers, one only of whom returned to give thanks.

In the character of Jesus we see what the world never read of before, one that is absolutely perfect. Invention and cunning could not effect this; it is only to be accounted for by the image of perfection being before the eyes of the writers, and by their simply narrating the truth. It is plain by the history that love and benevolence were the ruling principles of his actions; that truth and faithfulness were the law of his lips, with whomsoever he came in contact; that heavenly wisdom guided all his decisions. His axioms of truth contain the soundest philosophy; his pene-

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tration into the secrets of the heart of those that appeared before him could not be human.

We must also notice the dignity and ease with which Jesus spake on the most heavenly and sublime things, how admirably he rendered them familiar by inimitable parables and other forms of speech, his perfect command of himself upon all occasions, and his affability and condescension; so that it was truly said of him, "Never man spake as this man."

The particular line of argument adopted in the two former sections might have been pursued to a considerable length, and is capable of affording satisfaction to every unprejudiced inquirer respecting the origin of Christianity; but I flatter myself that I shall perform a more acceptable service by pointing out to the student all the separate points of argument on which the advocates of Christianity have placed their chief confidence, adding only a few hints, and a reference to the authors from whom further instruction is to be derived.

I. In stating the evidence for the truth of Christianity there is nothing more worthy of consideration than the *authenticity* of the books of the New Testament. This is the foundation on which all other arguments rest; and, if it is solid, the Christian religion is fully established. The proofs for the authenticity of the New Testament have this peculiar advantage, that they are plain and simple, and involve no metaphysical subtleties. Every man who can distinguish truth from falsehood must see their force; and if there are any so blinded by prejudice, or corrupted by licentiousness, as to attempt by sophistry to elude them, their sophistry will be easily detected by every man of common understanding who has read the historical evidence with candour and attention.

We receive the books of the New Testament as the genuine works of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul, for

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the same reason that we receive the writings of Zenophon, Polybius, Plutarch, Cæsar, and Livy. We have the uninterrupted testimony of all ages, and we have no reason to suspect imposition. This argument is much stronger when applied to the books of the New Testament than when applied to any other writings; for they were addressed to large societies, were often read in their presence, and acknowledged by them to be the writings of the apostles. Whereas, the most eminent profane writings which still remain were addressed only to individuals, or to no persons at all: and we have no authority to affirm that they were read in public; on the contrary, we know that a liberal education was uncommon; books were scarce, and the knowledge of them was confined to a few individuals in every nation. The New Testament was read over three quarters of the world, while profane writers were limited to one nation or to one country. An uninterrupted succession of writers from the apostolic ages to the present time quote the sacred writings, or make allusions to them; and these quotations and allusions are made, not only by friends, but by enemies. This cannot be asserted of even the best classic authors. And it is highly probable that the translations of the New Testament were made so early as the second century; and in a century or two after they became very numerous. After this period it was impossible to forge new writings, or to corrupt the sacred text, unless we can suppose that men of different nations, of different sentiments, and different languages, and often exceedingly hostile to one another, should all agree in one forgery. This is so strong that, if we deny the authenticity of the New Testament, we may with a thousand times more propriety reject all the other writings in the world; we may even throw aside human testimony itself. Those who wish to see this subject fully investigated must consult Taylor's Process of Historical Proof; and the valuable work of Michaelis.

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I may here just observe that the reasons which may induce a critic to suspect the authenticity of a work cannot at all apply to the New Testament. 1. It cannot be shown that its authenticity was doubted in the period in which it first appeared. 2. No ancient accounts are on record from which we may conclude it to be spurious. 3. No considerable period elapsed after the death of the apostles in which the New Testament was unknown; on the contrary, it is mentioned by their very contemporaries, and the accounts of it in the second century are still more numerous. 4. No argument can be brought in its disfavour from the nature of the style, it being exactly such as might be expected from the apostles—not Attic but Jewish Greek. 5. No facts are recorded which happened after their death. 6. No doctrines are maintained which contradict the known tenets of the authors, since, beside the New Testament, no writings of the apostles exist. But, to the honour of the New Testament be it spoken, it contains numerous contradictions to the tenets and doctrines of the fathers in the second and third centuries, whose morality was different from that of the gospel, which recommends fortitude and submission to unavoidable evils, but not that enthusiastic ardour for martyrdom for which these centuries are distinguished; it alludes to ceremonies which in the following ages were either in disuse or totally unknown; all which circumstances infallibly demonstrate that the New Testament is not a production of either of those centuries. The positive proofs of the authenticity of the New Testament are,

1. The *impossibility* of forgery, arising from the nature of the thing itself. This has been considered in the preceding observations on the subject, in which I have shown that if the writings of the evangelists had been forged (and the same will apply to the whole of the New Testament) the Jews could not have failed to detect the imposture; I may here ask, Is there a single instance on record where

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a few individuals have imposed a history upon the world against the testimony of a whole nation? Would the inhabitants of Palestine have received the gospels, if they had not had sufficient evidence that Jesus Christ really appeared among them, and performed the miracles ascribed to him? Or would the churches of Rome or of Corinth have acknowledged the epistles addressed to them as the genuine works of Paul, if Paul had never preached among them? We might as well think to prove that the history of the Reformation is the invention of historians; and that no revolution happened in Great Britain during the seventeenth century.

2. The uninterrupted chain of evidence arising from the *testimony of ancient writers*, Christians, Jews, and heathens, fully establish the authenticity of the New Testament. The history of the Christian church, corroborated by profane history, proves that the several books of the New Testament were the genuine production of the persons whose names they respectively bear;—that they were received, quoted, and preached by the next age, and in succession to every age since that time;—that copies of these Scriptures were taken, and translated into many languages, and in all agree, in substance, with the original (for however corrupt the church of Rome became, their copy of the Scriptures essentially agrees with the earliest copies in various languages);—that the true Christian character survived the most terrible persecutions;—that, in the darkest parts of the middle ages, the Waldenses and Albigenses (see Jones's History of the Christian Church) preserved entire the Christian church and doctrine till the time of the reformation in Germany, England, &c. See Jones's new and full Method of establishing the Canon of the New Testament.

3. We may remark particularly the *testimony* of various sects of *heretics* and also of *apostates* from Christianity, who would certainly have discovered the deception if any

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had been practised, but who never once called in question the authenticity of the books of the New Testament.

4. To which may be added the *internal evidences* of authenticity which arise out of the nature of the style, and the coincidence of the New Testament with the history of the times. See Paley's Horæ Paulinæ; and Blunt's Credibility of the Evangelists.

II. The authenticity of the books of the New Testament being ascertained, the evidence from *miracles* may be adduced as a full and sufficient proof that the doctrines which they were wrought to confirm came from God, who at first gave to creation its laws, and who alone could dispense with the operation of those laws. So thought Moses, when, in the matter of Korah, he said to the Israelites, "If these men die the common death of all men, then the Lord hath not sent me." So thought Elijah, when he said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant;"—and the people before whom he spake were of the same opinion; for when the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, they said, "The Lord he is the God." So thought our Saviour when he said, "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me;" and, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not." What reason have we to believe Jesus speaking in the gospel, and to disbelieve Mahomet speaking in the Koran? Both of them lay claim to a divine commission; and yet we receive the words of the one as a revelation from God, and we reject the words of the other as an imposture of man. The reason is evident; Jesus established his pretensions, not by alleging any secret communication with the Deity, but by working numerous and indubitable miracles in the presence of thousands, and which the most bitter and watchful of his enemies could not disallow; but Mahomet wrought no miracles at all.

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Now though we have not ourselves witnessed the miracles which were wrought, yet we know that the gospel was at first received upon this ground, as appeals to the senses,* and the apostles allude frequently in their epistles to the gift of miracles, which they had communicated to the Christian converts by the imposition of hands, in confirmation of the doctrine delivered in their speeches and writings, and sometimes to miracles which they themselves had performed. The case is here entirely different from that of an historian who relates extraordinary events in the course of his narrative, since either credulity or an actual intention to deceive may induce him to describe as true a series of falsehoods respecting a foreign land or distant period. Even to the evangelists might an adversary of the Christian religion make this objection: but to write to persons with whom we stand in the nearest connexion—"I have not only performed miracles in your presence, but have likewise communicated to you the same extraordinary endowments"—to write in this manner if nothing of the kind had ever happened, would require such an incredible degree of effrontery that he who possessed it would not only expose himself to the utmost ridicule, but, by giving his adversaries the fairest opportunity to detect his imposture, would ruin the cause which he attempted to support. The several epistles of St. Paul are addressed to different communities by whom the gospel had very recently been received. In these epistles he appeals to the miracles which he had performed, and to the gifts of the Holy Spirit which he had communicated. Now is it possible, without forfeiting all pretensions to common sense, that, in writing to communities which had been lately established, he could speak of miracles performed, and gifts of the Holy Ghost communicated, if no member of these societies had seen the one or received the other? To suppose that an impostor could write to the converts or adversaries of the new

* Vide Jortin on John v. 36.

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religion such epistles as these, with a degree of triumph over his opponents, and yet maintain his authority, implies ignorance and stupidity hardly to be believed. Credulous as the Christians have been in later ages, and even so early as the third century, no less severe were they in their inquiries, and guarded against deception, at the introduction of Christianity. This character is given them even by Lucian, a writer of the second century, who vented his satire, not only against certain Christians who had supplied Peregrinus with the means of subsistence, but also against heathen oracles and pretended wonders. He relates of his impostor (Pseudomantis) that he attempted nothing supernatural in the presence of the Christians and Epicureans.

In this argument, it has been justly observed, it is needless to waste time in proving that those miracles, as they are represented in the writings of the New Testament, were of such a nature and performed before so many witnesses, that no imposition could possibly be practised on the senses of those who affirm that they were present. From every page of the gospels this is so evident that the philosophical adversaries of the Christian faith never suppose the apostles to have been themselves deceived, but boldly accuse them of bearing false witness. But, if this accusation be well founded, their testimony itself is as great a miracle, or, in other words, as real a deviation from the laws of nature, as any which they record of themselves or of their master. When they sat down to fabricate their pretended revelation, and to contrive a series of miracles to which they were all to appeal for its truth, it is plain, since they proved successful in their daring enterprise, that they must have clearly foreseen every possible circumstance in which they could be placed, and have prepared consistent answers to every question that could be put to them by their most inveterate and most enlightened enemies; by the statesman, the lawyer, the philosopher,

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and the priest. That such foreknowledge as this would have been miraculous will not surely be denied; since it forms the very attribute which we find it most difficult to allow even to God himself. It is not, however, the only miracle which this supposition would compel us to admit. The very resolution of the apostles to propagate the belief of false miracles, in support of *such* a religion as that which is taught in the New Testament, would have been as wide a deviation from the laws of nature, and therefore as great a miracle, as the mind of man has ever conceived. When they formed this design, either they must have hoped to succeed, or they must have been convinced that they should fail in their undertaking; and in either case they chose evil, and what they knew to be unmixed evil, for its own sake! They could not, if they foresaw that they should fail, look for any thing but that contempt, disgrace, and persecution, which were then the inevitable consequences of an unsuccessful endeavour to overthrow the established religion. Nor would their prospects be brighter on the supposition of their success. As they knew themselves to be false witnesses, and impious deceivers, they could have no hope beyond the grave; and by determining to oppose all the religious systems, superstitions, and prejudices of the age in which they lived, they wilfully exposed themselves to inevitable misery in the present life, to insult and imprisonment, to stripes and death. Nor can it be alleged that they might look forward to power and affluence, when they should through sufferings have converted their countrymen; for so desirous were they of obtaining nothing but misery, as the end of their mission, that they made their own persecution a test of the truth of their doctrines. They introduced the Master from whom they professed to have received those doctrines, as telling them that they were sent forth "as sheep in the midst of wolves;" that they should be "delivered up to councils, and scourged in synagogues; that they should be hated of all men for his

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name's sake;" that "the brother should deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child; and that "he who took not up his cross and followed him, was not worthy of him." The very system of religion, therefore, which they invented, and resolved to impose upon mankind, was so contrived that the worldly prosperity of its first preachers, and even their exemption from persecution, was incompatible with its success. Had these clear predictions of the author of that religion, under whom the apostles and evangelists acted only as ministers, not been verified, all mankind must have instantly perceived that their claim to inspiration was groundless, and that Christianity was a scandalous and impudent imposture. All this the apostles could not but foresee when they formed their plan for deluding the world. Whence it follows that, when they resolved to support their pretended revelation by an appeal to forged miracles, they wilfully, and with their eyes open, exposed themselves to inevitable misery, whether they should succeed or fail in their enterprise; and that they concerted their measures in such a manner as not to admit a possibility of recompence to themselves, either in this life or in that which is to come. But if there be a law of nature the reality of which we have better evidence than we have for others, it is "that no man can choose misery for its own sake," or make the acquisition of it the ultimate end of all his pursuits. The existence of other laws of nature we know by testimony, and our own observation of the regularity of their effects. The existence of this law is made known to us, not only by these means, but also by the still clearer and more conclusive evidence of every man's own consciousness. Thus, then, do miracles force themselves upon our assent in every possible view which we can take of this interesting subject.

The independent testimony of Paul, and his extraordinary conversion and ministry, have been very ably exhi-



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bited, as affording additional evidence, by Lord Lyttleton. If it could be supposed that the evangelists were confederated together for the purpose of fabricating the gospel, yet how came Paul, without any communication with them, to stop in the midst of his efforts for persecuting the Christians—to turn round and preach the "faith which once he destroyed," and to imbibe the same spirit and willingly expose himself to the same sufferings as the other disciples, rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ?—See the Supplementary Dissertation on the Miracles of our Lord and his Apostles inserted by Bishop Gleig in his new edition of Stackhouse's History of the Bible. Also Campbell on Miracles; and Dr. Collier's treatise on the same subject.

III. The argument from *prophecy* is of great importance, and can be fully established on evidence distinct from the testimony of its supporters. Whoever compares the language of prophecy in the Old Testament with the events recorded in the New, cannot but admit that there is a real correspondence between them; and this correspondence is so close and circumstantial that some of the disciples of infidelity have been driven to the easily refuted assertion, that the prophecies were written after the events had taken place. Had the prophetic writings of the Old Testament been under the control of the Christians, the argument for their antiquity would not have been so completely satisfactory as it now is. The Jews have always been influenced by feelings of the strongest hostility to Christianity; they are galled incessantly by the triumphant tone in which Christians appeal to their prophecies; and can it be supposed that, notwithstanding all this, they have actually combined with Christians to fabricate these writings, and to palm them upon the world?

But it is necessary to recur to two or three remarkable predictions of Jesus Christ himself, the minute fulfilment

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of which demonstrates that they could only proceed from the spirit of prophecy—the inspiration of the Almighty. The first which I shall mention is the announcement or prophecy respecting himself. This is intimated figuratively and plainly; figuratively in the parable of the vineyard and husbandmen; Luke xx. 9, &c., and John xii. 24, and also ver. 32: plainly, Matt. xvi. 21; Luke xviii. 31, &c. These plain expressions, being without the least figure, required a literal fulfilment as to his death, the manner, means, &c., and as to his resurrection at a precise time, the third day, which was to remove for ever the ignominy of the cross: his personal revival was in effect the invigorated and prolific revival of his cause; John xii. 24; Ps. lxxii. 16. If the Jews had any thing to object against this representation, why was it not objected on the day of Pentecost, when Peter boldly declared the resurrection of Christ, and when it was reiterated before the Jewish council, Acts iv.? Were they not still as a stone? and did not that profound silence at such a time demonstrate the fact? The announcement of Jesus, that he, "being ascended far above all heavens," would send his Holy Spirit upon his disciples soon after his death (John xvi. 7), is another prediction which was fulfilled in a remarkable manner on the day of Pentecost. This effusion of the Spirit was witnessed by the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and those devout Jews who assembled themselves at the feast: Acts vi. 13. Here was surely publicity enough.

If, however, these prescient intimations received such evident demonstration of their truth before friends, strangers, and enemies—the humble and the elevated characters of the Jewish nation—we shall refer with equal confidence to the announcement of Jesus Christ respecting the destruction of Jerusalem. This is covertly hinted at by Jesus, in his conversation with the woman of Samaria: John iv. 21: "Woman believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in



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this mountain, nor yet *at Jerusalem*, shall ye worship the Father." In another place it is declared, in a manner which cannot be mistaken: "As Jesus went out of the temple, one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here. And Jesus answering said, Seest thou these great buildings? There *shall not be one stone left upon another* that shall not be cast down:" Mark xiii. 2. But in another passage it takes the form of a solemn prediction of the judgment of heaven upon the city: "And when he (Jesus) was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it; saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side; and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the day of thy visitation:" Luke xix. 41, &c. Now we know, from Josephus, that about forty years afterwards Jerusalem was destroyed under circumstances unusually calamitous, and the temple, in particular, overthrown, in spite of the endeavours of the conqueror himself to preserve it standing; and that the Christians were preserved from the general calamity in consequence of their complying with the directions of Christ which referred to this event: Matt. xxiv. 15—18. But nothing could well appear more improbable than the fulfilment of this prophecy at the time when it was uttered. The Jews were at this time resolved to avoid an open rebellion, well knowing the greatness of their danger; and submitted to the oppressions of their governors in the hopes of obtaining redress from the court of Rome. The threatened destruction of Jerusalem was opposed to all their national prejudices. They confidently relied upon divine

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protection. The idea of being deserted by that care, and seeing their city in the hands of foreigners, was not more shocking to their pride than contradictory to their faith. Such an event was treated by their writers, not as a danger, or a disgrace, or a calamity, but as an *abomination*; Dan. xi. 31; Matt. xxiv. 15: and we know from history that when the catastrophe really happened they obstinately shut their eyes to the nearness and extent of the danger, they would not believe that Gentile hands would ever be suffered to pollute the sanctuary which they so highly revered, and expected to the last that a divine interposition would preserve their temple, at the least, from the general overthrow. The circumstance which eventually gave birth to their misfortunes is so trifling in itself, that, independent of its consequences, it would not deserve to be recorded. In the narrow entrance to a synagogue in Cæsarea some person had made an offering of birds, merely with a view to irritate the Jews. The insult excited their indignation, and occasioned the shedding of blood. This seemingly trifling circumstance, ordained by Him without whose permission a sparrow cannot fall to the ground, gave rise to a bloody war, which ended in the fulfilment of our Saviour's prophecy by the total destruction of Jerusalem, and the dreadful massacre of its inhabitants. Florus, who was then procurator of Judea, converted this private quarrel into public hostilities, and compelled the Jewish nation to rebel, contrary to its wish and resolution, to avoid what the Jews had threatened, an impeachment before the Roman emperor for his excessive cruelties. But even after this rebellion had broken out, the destruction of the temple was a very improbable event. It was not the practice of the Romans to destroy the magnificent edifices of the nations which they subdued; and, of all the Roman generals, none was more unlikely to demolish so ancient and august a building than Titus Vespasian.

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Many prophecies have been fulfilled in more recent times, and some are even now fulfilling, in the present spread of the gospel among heathen nations. Others remain yet to be fulfilled; so that in the evidence of prophecy we have a rising barrier, which may receive from time to time a new accumulation to the materials which form it. See Sherlock on the Use and Intent of Prophecy —Bishop Newton on the Prophecies—Maclaurin on the Prophecies respecting the Messiah—and Paley's Evidences, Part ii., chap. 1.

IV. The acknowledged *excellency* of the *morals* inculcated in the gospel, together with its peculiar *adaptation* to the condition of man, and its actual efficiency in forming the character and disposition of those who receive it, furnish another branch of evidence which must satisfy every unprejudiced inquirer, who is conversant with the defective character and absolute insufficiency of every system which human philosophy has devised, that Christianity is a revelation from God. It is only necessary for friend or enemy to see this adaptation of Christianity to its professed design, to be satisfied that "this is the true grace of God in which we stand." And what is our gospel? What does it teach? It assumes and teaches the universal ruin of all mankind by the fall, and provides for the restoration of all that receive its testimony in a manner that does complete honour to all the divine attributes and perfections, by a Mediator at once divine and human; by his finishing transgression, making an end of sin, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness; by placing the applicatory part of salvation in the hands of the Holy Spirit, to renew the heart, to cleanse from sin, to sanctify the life, to enlighten the understanding, to gain the will, to engage the affections, to implant all virtues in the heart, to excite to every good work; so that grace may reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life.

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It might excite our astonishment that a scheme so honourable to Jehovah, and so safe and complete for man, did not immediately procure the assent of at least all the intelligent of mankind, especially when accompanied, as it was in its early career, by "mighty signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost." Notwithstanding which Christianity still met with the most determined opposition; it had to attest its authority in the blood of hundreds of thousands of martyrs, and to work its way in the hearts of men as the leaven works in the meal, or by way of moral influence, and to prove itself true by its purifying nature and mighty energy, pulling down strong holds, overcoming principalities and powers, eradicating deep-rooted prejudices and false principles, and bringing every thought into subjection to the obedience of Christ.

It might also excite our wonder that a scheme so divine, and which has worked eighteen hundred years, should yet be understood and savingly received by so few; and that hostility should exist even to the present day. But such astonishment is improper, and shows that even we only in part know the Scriptures. Our dear Lord marked with divine precision the success which should attend his gospel; he foretold that it would be met by persecution; that it would be the innocent cause of painful divisions in communities and families;—he also foretold the abuses that would be introduced; the corruptions that would grow up in his church; the daring innovators who should arise to sow tares in his field; that the effects of gospel doctrines would be various in various characters, as exemplified by the parable of the sower, Matt. xiii.; that seasons of persecution would induce the apostasy of many, and that times of prosperity would produce hypocrites; that the love of many, even of his own people, would wax cold; that some would slumber and others sleep, while others would shine as the light in his spiritual kingdom. He

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gave the most serious cautions upon these points, and the most exact premonitions of what should happen in futurity. But with the intimation of these things he blended some other things of a more agreeable nature, that he would be with his people "to the end of the world;" that, notwithstanding the expected opposition, his gospel should be preached and spread throughout all nations; and that the gates of hell should not be able to prevail against his cause and kingdom. Now if we carefully observe these representations we must perceive that they perfectly concur with what we daily see; so that this very state of things (the most unfavourable and discouraging, viewing the painful side of the statement, and which no human imagination could have considered to have resulted from a system of religion so excellent in itself), so far from shaking our faith in the gospel, affords an accession of evidence beyond what would have been acquired under another order of things. If the gospel prevailed more easily over the constitution of corrupt nature, we might be led either to conclude that human nature was not so perverse as represented, or that the prophecies of Jesus had not been realized. But now every thing occurs as expected: the conflict between light and darkness still exists; and in the midst of this conflict we see, by means of the excellency of the gospel, a character arise to view before but imperfectly known to the world—a character formed after the pattern of Christ, by purity of heart, humility in the life, a constant reverence of the Divine Being, and submission to his will—a character emptied and purged from selfishness, and full of love to all mankind; under injuries returning good for evil—a mind irradiated with truth—affections set on heavenly things—counting time by its possibilities for usefulness—estimating happiness by the power possessed to diffuse it—breathing, thirsting for immortality, yet unwilling to leave any thing undone here behind him.

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Whatever charities can grow upon human nature, they are cherished; whatever talents heaven imparts, they are exercised. On this part of the subject I make no apology for quoting the concession of a celebrated infidel, J. J. Rousseau, whose immoralities accorded with his principles, but who had not extinguished in his bosom every spark of truth and justice:

"The gospel [by which term he intends the whole narrative of the actions and discourses of Jesus, as comprised in the writings of the four evangelists], that divine book, the only one necessary to a Christian, and the most useful of all to the man who may not be one, only requires reflection upon it to impress the mind with love for its Author and resolution to fulfil his precepts. Virtue never spoke in gentler terms; the profoundest wisdom was never uttered with greater energy or more simplicity. It is impossible to rise from the reading of it without a feeling of moral improvement. Look at the books of the philosophers; with all their pomp how little they are, compared with this!—Shall we say that the history of the gospel is a pure fiction? This is not the style of fiction; and the history of Socrates, which nobody doubts, rests upon less evidence than that of Jesus Christ. And after all, this is but shifting the difficulty; not answering it. The supposition that several persons had united to fabricate this book, is more inconceivable than that one person should have supplied the subject of it. The spirit which it breathes, the morality which it inculcates, could never have been the invention of Jewish authors; and the gospel possesses characters of truth so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that the inventor would be a more astonishing object than the hero."

Where then and what is the contempt of infidels, the scorn of the proud, and the neglect of a cold and unfeeling world? Where will such characters hide their shame?



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what shall cover the confusion that will burst upon them in the day of discovery? Talk of reason, the elevation of philosophy, the knowledge of the world! these are but the fancied dreams of a distempered mind, which, "like the baseless fabric of a vision," shall but mock the return of light and the reflection of the morning; but "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shall shine more and more unto the perfect day."—See *Hill's Lectures on the Internal Evidences of Christianity; and Erskine's Essay on the same subject.*

V. The Jews of the present day are also a living evidence of the truth of the Christian religion. Our religion is founded on the abrogation of theirs, Rom. xi. 20; and though the Jews could be supposed right and the Christians wrong, yet the fact remains the same; the origin of Christianity stands undisputed. The Jews never denied the facts of the gospel; they only denied the true Messiahship of Jesus. Very lately a respectable and sensible Jew addressed the Secretary of State (Mr. Peel) to ask for the removal of their disabilities. He pleads that they have the same belief of Moses and the prophets that Jesus professed; that he was *their brother*, but that they put him to death for attempting to found a new religion.

Having thus briefly adverted to the several branches of evidence which I consider legitimate and conclusive, I take my leave of the subject in the words of Dr. Chalmers, in his admirable work on the Evidence and Authority of the Christian Revelation: "The great strength of the Christian argument lies in the historical evidence for the truth of the gospel narrative. In discussing the light of this evidence, we walk by the light of experience. We assign the degree of weight that is due to the testimony of the first Christians upon the observed principles of human nature. We do not step beyond the cautious procedure of Lord Bacon's philosophy. We keep within the safe and certain

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limits of experimental truth. We believe the testimony of the apostles, because, from what we know of the human character, it is impossible that men in their circumstances could have persevered as they did in the assertion of a falsehood; it is impossible that they could have imposed this falsehood upon such a multitude of followers; it is impossible that they could have escaped detection, surrounded as they were by a host of enemies, so eager and so determined in their resentments. On this kind of argument we are quite at home. There is no theory, no assumption. We feel every inch of the ground we are treading upon. The degree of credit that should be annexed to the testimony of the apostles is altogether a question of experience. Every principle which we apply towards the decision of this question is founded upon materials which lie before us, and are every day within the reach of observation. Our belief in the testimony of the apostles is founded upon our experience of human nature and human affairs. In the whole process of the inquiry we never wander from that sure though humble path, which has been pointed out to us by the great master of philosophizing. We never cast off the authority of those maxims which have been found in every other department of knowledge to be sound and infallible. We never suffer assumption to take the precedency of observation, or abandon that safe and certain mode of investigation which is the only one suited to the real mediocrity of our powers.

"It appears to us that the disciples of the infidel philosophy have reversed this process. They take a loftier flight. You seldom find them upon the ground of the historical evidence. It is not, in general, upon the weight or the nature of human testimony, that they venture to pronounce on the credibility of the Christian revelation. It is on the character of that revelation itself. It is on what they conceive to be the absurdity of its doctrines. It is

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because they see something in the nature or dispensation of Christianity which they think disparaging to the attributes of God, and not agreeable to that line of proceeding which the Almighty should observe in the government of his creatures. Rousseau expresses [as we have seen] his astonishment at the strength of the historical testimony, so strong that the inventor of the narrative appeared to him to be more miraculous than the hero. But the absurdities of this said revelation are sufficient, in his mind, to bear down the whole weight of its direct and external evidences. There was something in the doctrines of the New Testament repulsive to the taste and the imagination, and perhaps even to the convictions, of this interesting enthusiast. He could not reconcile them with his pre-established conceptions of the divine character and mode of operation. To submit to these doctrines, he behoved to surrender that theism which the powers of his ardent mind had wrought up into a most beautiful and delicious speculation. Such a sacrifice was not to be made. It was too painful. It would have taken away from him what every mind of genius and sensibility esteems to be the highest of all luxuries. It would destroy a system which had all that is fair and magnificent to recommend it, and mar the gracefulness of that fine intellectual picture on which this wonderful man had bestowed all the embellishments of feeling, and fancy, and eloquence.

"In as far, then, as we can judge of the conduct of man in given circumstances, we would pass a favourable sentence upon the testimony of the apostles. But, says the Deist, I judge of the conduct of God; and what the apostles tell me of him is so opposite to that judgment, that I discredit their testimony. The question at issue between us is, Shall we admit the testimony of the apostles, upon the application of principles founded on observation, and as certain as is our experience of human affairs? Or shall we

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reject that testimony upon the application of principles that are altogether beyond the range of observation, and as doubtful and imperfect in their nature as is our experience of the counsels of Heaven? In the first argument there is no assumption. We are competent to judge of the behaviour of man in given circumstances. This is a subject completely accessible to observation. The second argument is founded upon assumption entirely. We are not competent to judge of the conduct of the Almighty in given circumstances. Here we are precluded, by the nature of the subject, from the benefit of observation. There is no antecedent experience to guide or to enlighten us. It is not for man to assume what is right, or proper, or natural for the Almighty to do. It is not in the mere spirit of piety that we say so; it is in the spirit of the soundest experimental philosophy. The argument of the Christian is precisely what the maxims of Lord Bacon would dispose us to acquiesce in. The argument of the infidel is precisely that argument which the same maxims would dispose us to reject; and, when put by the side of the Christian argument, it appears as crude and unphilosophical as do the ingenious speculations of the schoolmen when set in opposition to the rigour, and evidence, and precision, which reign in every department of modern science.

"The application of Lord Bacon's philosophy to the study of external nature was a happy epoch in the history of physical science. It is not long since this application has been extended to the study of moral and intellectual phenomena. All that we contend for is, that our subject should have the benefit of the same application; and we count it hard, while in every other department of inquiry a respect for truth is found sufficient to repress the appetite for system-building, that theology, the loftiest and most inaccessible of all the sciences, should still remain in-

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fected with a spirit so exploded and so unphilosophical; and that the fancy, and theory, and unsupported speculation, so current among the Deists and demi-infidels of the day, should be held paramount to the authority of facts which have come down to us with a weight of evidence and testimony that is quite unexampled in the history of ancient times."

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# LECTURE XXIV.

## TOPIC XX.

### REMARK THE GOOD AND BAD IN EXPRESSIONS AND ACTIONS.

THIS Topic is of very great use in explaining the histories recorded in the gospel, where you will frequently find actions and words which may be called *mixed;* because, in general, they proceed from some good principles, and, in particular, they have a good deal of weakness and infirmity in them. If you would explain Matt. xvi. 22: "Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee;" you may observe what there is good, and what bad, in this expression of St. Peter. 1. You see herein his *love* to his master; for his not being able to bear the discourse of Jesus Christ concerning his sufferings at Jerusalem, could only proceed from his ardent affection to him. 2. Herein appears not that cold and lukewarm regard which most men have for one another, but a most *lively* affection, interesting him for his master; an affection full of tenderness, which could not even bear to hear a word, or entertain a thought, about the death of Jesus Christ. 3. You may observe an *honest freedom*, which put him upon freely addressing Jesus Christ himself, using that familiar access which his condescension allowed his disciples, without a mixture of mean and despicable timidity. 4. You see, in fine, a strong *faith* in his master's power, as by addressing him he seems

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persuaded that it depended only on himself to suffer or not to suffer: "Lord, be it far from thee; this shall not be unto thee." Now all these are *good* dispositions. Here follow the *bad* ones. 1. Peter discovers gross *ignorance* of the ways of divine wisdom in sending Jesus Christ into the world, for he does not seem yet to know that Jesus Christ must needs suffer; and with this ignorance the Lord reproaches him in the next verse: "Thou savourest not the things which are of God, but those which are of men." 2. His love to his master had something merely human and *carnal* in it, since he only considered the preservation of his temporal life, and concerned himself only about his body, instead of elevating his mind to that superior glory of Jesus Christ which was to follow his sufferings, or considering the great work of man's salvation, to perform which he came into the world. 3. You may also remark a troublesome and criminal *boldness*. He means to be wiser than Jesus Christ. "Peter took him," says the Evangelist, "and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee." Rash attempt! as if Peter were called into the council of God and Jesus Christ his Son, to give his opinion concerning this grand affair. 4. It even seems as if Peter, hearing Christ speak of his sufferings, imagined this discourse proceeded only from his fear of death, and from a mean timidity; for he aims to encourage and comfort him as we do persons whose fears exceed the bounds of reason: "Lord!" says he, "be it far from thee, do not afflict yourself so groundlessly."

The excellences and failings which may be mixed in human character, and the compound of truth and error in human sentiment, open to us a wide field of profitable observation and of comment; and it must be admitted that the language of Scripture furnishes numerous opportunities of adverting to this Topic. Happy indeed is it for us that one great example of unmingled excellence is set before us

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in the character of our Lord. In him we have a full exhibition of perfection in our nature, so that looking to him we may see clearly what we ought to aim at under every variety of situation in which we may be placed. Through grace received from him, many have gone far in imitating his blessed example. The very record of their failings is a direct proof that they were in general irreproachable in character and eminent in holiness; for their imperfections are noticed as exceptions to their general character.

A few individuals are introduced in the Scriptures to whom no fault stands charged; as Enoch, Joseph, Caleb, Joshua, Samuel, Isaiah, &c. In the wisdom of God it did not appear necessary to produce the whole of their respective characters, but only such parts as stood connected with the general history, or were most fitted to benefit succeeding generations. Commonly, however, the unlovely as well as the brighter part of the character of God's servants, is fully portrayed; and it is worthy of remark that their recorded faults are frequently such as might least have been expected from them. Over their very virtues Satan was permitted a temporary triumph. The intemperance of Noah, the sinful timidity of Abraham and of Isaac, Jacob's dissimulation and falsehood, Job's impatience, the intemperate anger of Moses, David's flagrant transgressions, Solomon's backsliding, Asa's wrath against the Lord's prophet, Elijah's uncharitableness, Jehoshaphat's improper league with Ahab, Josiah's rashness, Hezekiah's vanity, and Peter's denial of Christ,—these are spots upon the garments of holy men which are not concealed from posterity, but undisguisedly exposed for our admonition and better caution.

At the same time it must be observed that in Scripture equal justice is done to characters decidedly bad; their occasional good acts had the reward of an honourable narrative, so far as they deserved it. Preachers will follow this example, and speak well of characters as far as truth

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will permit and true candour demands: see 1 Cor. xiii. No character is wholly bad: God does not permit men to become wholly devils on this fair spot of his creation; and what he does permit he overrules for good. But the principal province of a preacher's investigation in reference to this Topic will be the character of good men, and the intermixtures of qualities found in them.

And here I observe that the Scriptures give us the very philosophy of the subject as well as its historical material. The two principles in every good man are clearly pointed out, and called the flesh and the spirit, the old and the new man. Our Lord opens this mystery, Matt. xxvi. 41 "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Between these two principles there is in every good man a continual conflict, Gal. v. 17: "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that we cannot do the thing that we would." This conflict and this commixture, these contrarieties and paradoxes, are particularly laid open in Paul's seventh chapter to the Romans.* Here we have the motions of sin, and the excitements of divine grace; the flesh provoking to sin, in which the spirit gives neither consent nor concurrence. We have captivities and deliverance; bitter complaints and joyful thanksgivings. We read of no such conflicts in the mind of Jehu or Herod; their history is of different motions, but no conflict appears. The good and the bad are so mentioned in history as to leave no one in doubt of their real character. Of Jehu it is said that he completely and zealously fulfilled Jehovah's purposes on the whole house and wicked religious economy of Ahab; so that he might well say, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord of hosts." Yet this was the subsequent record concerning him: "Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from following after them." Thus we conclude that his

* See Dr. Stafford's Sermons on the whole of this chapter.

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general character was radically bad. Herod became a disciple of John the Baptist, took him into his court, "heard him gladly, did many things;" but he discovered the rottenness of his principles in his subsequently yielding up John to the wicked revenge of his unlawful wife: so that accidental circumstances threw a mantle of religion over him, but, as it did not fit him close, the first puff of wind blew it off again. Similar observations might be made on the first three classes of hearers noticed in our Lord's parable of the sower. A religion they had, but one that did not cover them, or did not fit them. Is it possible that a preacher can be more useful than when he is judiciously engaged in separating the precious from the vile, and showing to each of his hearers "his form and feature?" And by all means let the preacher examine himself by the same rule. Even our motives in preaching may have some bad taint, though sound upon the whole; and we have reason to pray, in the language of the church, "Cleanse thou the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit," that all our words and intentions may be pleasing in God's sight.

We must also recollect that the only object which must be had in view in these retrospects of character is purely the edification, comfort, or caution of the people; to hold up (as St. Paul did, 1 Cor. x. and Heb. ii. 3, &c.) a glass to the present age, and not to gratify a foolish passion for passing judgments.

This Topic is capable of affording a very agreeable variety in division; and as the examples given on character, or of the good and bad, in my thirteenth Lecture, were of the historical kind, I shall now offer a few of a more general nature.

No. 1.—Jay's Sermons, vol. ii., on Job xxix. 18: "Then I said, I shall die in my nest."

I. In these words we see something good; even in his greatest prosperity Job had thoughts of dying.

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II. Something desirable; the continuance of providential mercies. Our error in desiring temporal things consists,

1. In desiring them *unconditionally*.

2. In desiring them *supremely*.

III. Something very common; it is affluence and ease cherishing confidence and presumption.

IV. Something false and vain; "I shall die in my nest." While Job was thus giving security to his soul, the storm was rising which soon shook down his nest and lodged its contents upon the dunghill. Children, wife, property, reputation, may all be removed in a day; therefore his gratulations were premature: Prov. xxvii. 1.

No. 2.—Burder's Village Sermons, vol. i., p. 1, on Acts xvi. 30, 31: "What shall I do to be saved?"

I. There are some excellent tokens of character in the jailer.

1. His deep sense of the value of his soul.

2. His views of sin, which he saw endangered his soul.

3. His presentiment that Paul and Silas could give him counsel on the subject.

II. There was also much that was wrong.

1. There was a strong leaning to creatures' help.

2. Much legal fear, which brings on a bondage state, Gal. iv. 24.

3. Great ignorance, though a happy sensibility of it.

No. 4.—Simeon's Horæ Homiliticæ, vol. i., p. 304, on 1 Sam. xiii. 11—13.

I. Show how far the conduct of Saul was good and commendable.

1. He dared not encounter his adversary till he had sought God.

2. He sought after an appointed manner, viz. by sacrifice.

II. In what respects he was reprehensible.

Samuel's speech does not imply a charge that Saul had usurped the priest's office. Indeed, ever since the Israelites

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came out of the wilderness, there had been by sufferance very great irregularity in the sacrificial offering; but,

1. His unbelieving precipitancy in curtailing the appointed time.

2. His unwarrantable dependance on a merely ritual observance.

No. 4.—Idem, vol. iv., p. 135, on Mark xiv. 31: "And Peter spake, &c."

I. The wisdom of the resolution, as worthy of the Christian character.

1. Our Saviour deserves it at our hands.

2. At our hands he requires it.

II. The folly of the resolution, as announced in his own strength.

No. 5.—J. Howe, vol. iii., p. 441, on John xi. 16: "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." There was no doubt an abounding fulness of sense in this good man's soul, from whence these words did proceed; and it might be two-fold, either good and commendable, fit for our imitation, or faulty and reprehensible.

I. There was much in this language that was commendable. It evinced,

1. A firm belief of a future state.

2. A mind loose and disengaged from the present world.

3. Easy, placid thoughts of dying.

4. A distinguishing judgment of the states of men hereafter, that they will correspond with the characters they bear on earth.

5. A rational and charitable opinion and estimate that he was sincerely good and happy with whom he wished to be united in death.

6. A most ardent and generous love to such excellent characters, expressed by a desire to die with them.

7. A lively apprehension of the large abounding diffusion

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of the divine fulness, sufficiently able to replenish all that shall be prepared to partake in it.

8. Preference of the society with holy beings in the heavenly state above any to be enjoyed on earth.

II. There might be an intermixture in the temper of this good man, somewhat of a faulty character; as,

1. There might be too little consideration had of the dignity and value of human life, and which God so graciously sustains.

2. The words seem not to savour enough of that deference which is due to the God of our lives, whose prerogative it is "to kill and make alive."

3. Too little gratitude for the mercies of life, or patience of its difficulties; somewhat like to that of Jonah.

4. Too little regard to the business of life, especially the great affair of the apostleship; Matt. x. 1, &c.

5. Not a sufficient apprehension how awful a thing it was to die,—to change states,—to pass into eternity.

6. Too much displacency at the providence of God in taking away such a man at such a time, &c.

These thoughts will, upon examination, be found great and weighty, evidently leading to the conclusions to be drawn from them, and especially the last subdivision, which might be in exact parallel with those entertained on the demise of so great a man as Dr. Bates, whose death occasioned the discourse.*

The following example, on imperfect goodness, may be considered as within the limits of our Topic. It is the production of Saurin, founded on Hos. vi. 4: "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee?" &c.

This fickle, inconstant religion, is bad enough; but it is not hypocrisy, against which the fire of divine anger will certainly fall. Nor is it the feeble piety of a tottering Christian; for, however imperfect his piety may be, it is real, and it would be too severe to say of this piety, "It

* It is inserted in Dr. Bates's Works, p. 951.

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is like the early dew, and goeth away :" but it is between these two dispositions. It does not go so far as the latter, but it goes farther than the former. It is sincere, so it is superior to hypocrisy; but it is fruitless, and so it is inferior to weak piety. It is sufficient to discover sin, but not sufficient to correct it. It can promise sincerely, but it does not perform. It weeps, but it does not break off bad habits. It is a certain religion of times, circumstances, &c., and owes its birth frequently to public calamities, to solemn fasts, or to the approach of death, or the apprehensions of such an event; but it frequently vanishes with the causes which produced it, &c. All the images which Jehovah useth in the Scriptures to make himself known to us—those which are taken from our infirmities, our passions, our love, and our hatred—are insufficient to represent a Being too far elevated above men to be represented by any thing human. Yet all these images have a reality which agrees to the Supreme Being in an eminent manner, in a manner proportioned to his dignity. Jehovah represents himself as a prince who had formed a close connexion with his subject. This subject appears sensible of the honour done him. The prince signalizes his esteem by a profusion of benefits; the subject abuses them. The prince reproaches him; he is hardened. To reproaches have been added threatenings; threatenings have been followed by suspension of favours: the subject is touched, affected, reanimated. The prince receives the penitent with open arms, and crowns his return with redoubled acts of kindness; the ungrateful subject abuses them again. The prince again reproaches him, again threatens him, and again suspends the tokens of his love. To remove the same misery the subject uses the same means, and avails himself of the liberty of returning which the goodness of the prince allows him, and again he returns. The prince yet pities, and again pardons his relenting ingrate: but this perfidious subject, slighting the tenderness of his

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master, falls so often into this ungrateful behaviour that the prince becomes a prey to a thousand opposite thoughts; he feels himself divided between the fear of rewarding ingratitude and punishing fidelity. This image is most certainly infinitely beneath the Supreme Being; however, it is that image which he has chosen to employ. "What shall I do to thee, Ephraim?" Ephraim, Judah, why do ye rend my heart alternatively by your vices and virtues? Why do ye not suffer me either wholly to give myself to you, or wholly to detach my affections from you? Why do you not let me give a free course either to my justice or love? Either let me glorify myself by your return or by your ruin? Your devotions tie my hands; your crimes inflame my wrath. Shall I destroy a people who have recourse to my clemency? Shall I preserve a people who violate my laws? "What shall I do to thee, Ephraim? what shall I do to thee, Judah? for thy goodness is as a morning cloud, and like the early dew it goeth away?"

Here is indeed a very fine balancing of the account, of the good and bad; and it seems clear that the preponderance is on the side of the latter, and nothing but sovereign and free grace could save the guilty subject. He must go unless the prince cries, "Save him from going down into the pit, for I have found a ransom."

I have reserved Dr. Blair's example of the good and the bad as the subject of another section. Not indeed that the nature of the Topic may be better understood, but to give the subject upon which he treats a fair examination; because the Christian ministry and its just reputation depends on a proper issue of the great question, whether the desire of human applause should live or become extinct for ever. It is a question of life or death as to this fascinating, bewitching, imaginary being, and therefore I pray thee to hear me patiently.

The authority of Dr. Blair, supported as he is by a host

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of Christian moralists of very high name, and the general concurrent opinion running in the same channel, seem at least to prejudice the question, and to throw difficulties in the conclusion to be drawn from the statement of the case and the arguments to be adduced; and when it is further considered that the prevalent opinion has, for a great length of time, drawn the practice after it, and that even now that practice is as general as ever, it is confessed that something very solid and substantial will be required even to bring the matter to a state of suspense, more weighty still to subvert the plausibilities advanced in its favour.

But, if I do not succeed generally in representing what I consider to be the truth, at least I hope that the yet unprejudiced student, who desires to go into the work of his Master unembarrassed and unfettered by popular notions, will come to a fair opinion on the subject. Dr. Blair's discourse is the sixth of his second volume, text John xii. 43: "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." His position seems to be this—that, kept under proper restraints, the praise of men may be called in aid of great and worthy exertions: this is met by a contrary assertion, derived from the gospel, that no such passion should be tolerated; that it is uncalled for, mischievous, and sinful; and that the public good has other aids sufficiently powerful without it.

"Let us," says the doctor, "consider how far it [the love of praise] is an *allowable* principle of action—when it begins to be criminal—and upon what accounts we ought to guard against its acquiring the entire ascendant."

It seems that the love of praise is not much like the principles of action which the New Testament prescribes, since it must not be allowed its full operation, but placed under strict limitations, like a horse which must be held in with bit and bridle. We may ride the high-mettled animal, but he



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must carry us no faster than is allowable. But let us see how fast and how far he may go.

"We are intended by Providence to be connected with one another in society. Single, unassisted individuals could make small advances towards any valuable improvement. By means of society our wants are supplied, and our lives rendered comfortable; our capacities are enlarged, and our virtuous affections called forth into proper exercise. In order to confirm our mutual connexion, it was *necessary that some attracting power*, which had the effect of drawing men together, and strengthening the social ties, should pervade the human system. Nothing could more happily fulfil this purpose than our being so formed as to desire the esteem, and to delight in the good opinion, of each other. Had such a propensity been wanting, and selfish principles left to occupy its place, society must have proved an unharmonious and discordant state. Instead of mutual attraction, a repulsive power would have prevailed. Among men who had no regard to the approbation of one another, all intercourse would have been jarring and offensive. For the wisest ends, therefore, the desire of praise was made an original and powerful principle in the human breast.

"To a variety of good purposes it is subservient, and on many occasions co-operates with the principle of virtue. It awakens us from sloth, invigorates activity, and stimulates our efforts to excel. It has given rise to most of the splendid and to many of the useful enterprises of men. It has animated the patriot and fired the hero. Magnanimity, generosity, and fortitude, are what all mankind admire. Hence such as were actuated by the desire of extensive fame have been prompted to deeds which either participated of the spirit, or at least carried the *appearance*, of distinguished virtue. The desire of praise is generally connected with all the *finer sensibilities* of

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human nature (not of grace). It affords a ground on which exhortation, counsel, and reproof, can work a proper effect. Whereas, to be entirely destitute of this passion betokens an ignoble mind, on which no moral impression is easily made. Where there is no desire of praise there will be also no sense of reproach: and if that be extinguished, one of the principal guards of virtue is removed, and the path opened to many opprobrious pursuits. He whose countenance never glowed with shame, and whose heart never beat at the sound of praise, is not destined for any honourable distinction; is likely to grovel in the sordid quest of gain, or to slumber life away in the indolence of selfish pleasures.

"Abstracted from the sentiments which are connected with the love of praise, as a principle of action, the esteem of our fellow-creatures is an object which, on account of the advantages it brings, may be *lawfully pursued*. It is necessary to our success in every fair and honest undertaking. Not only our private interest, but our public usefulness, depends in a great measure upon it. The sphere of our influence is contracted or enlarged in proportion to the degree in which we enjoy the good opinion of the public. Men listen with an unwilling ear to one whom they do not honour; while a respected character adds weight to example, and authority to counsel. To desire the esteem of others for the sake of its effects, is not only allowable, but in many cases our duty; and to be totally indifferent to praise or censure is so far from being a virtue, that it is a real defect in character."

Such is Dr. Blair's statement of the value of this popular applause, and, being quite willing to give every advantage to the cause, we would add,—

"It is a principle the extinction of which would be like the annihilation, in the material world, of the principle of motion: without it all were torpid, and cold, and comfortless. Admitting what may be blameable in it, yet, when



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turned into the right direction, it prompts to every dignified and generous enterprise. It is erudition in the portico, skill in the lyceum, eloquence in the senate and in the pulpit, victory in the field. When once the soul is warmed by its generous ardour no difficulties deter, no danger terrifies, no labour tires. It is this which, giving to what is virtuous and honourable its just superiority over the gifts of birth and fortune, rescues the rich from a base subjection to the pleasures of sense, and makes them prefer a course of trial and hardship to a life of indolence and ease. It prevents the man of rank from acquiescing in his hereditary greatness, and spurs him forward in pursuit of personal distinction, and of a nobility which he may justly term his own. It moderates and qualifies the over-great inequality of human conditions; and reaching to those who are above the sphere of laws, and extending to cases which fall not within their province, it limits and circumscribes the power of the tyrant on his throne, and gives gentleness to war, and to pride humility.

"Nor is its influence confined to public life: to it is to be ascribed a large portion of that courtesy and disposition to please which, naturally producing a mutual appearance of good will, and a reciprocation of good offices, constitutes much of the comfort of private life, and gives their choicest sweets to social and domestic intercourse; and though it may sometimes bear a doubtful character, and were it no more than a splendid error, yet, considering that it works so often in the right direction, it were enough to urge in its behalf that it is a principle of real action and approved energy; it acts by motives and considerations suited to our condition, and is absolutely necessary in our present infirm state as an habitual aid, and even present support, to the feebleness of virtue. Reject not therefore a principle so universal in its influence, thus valuable in its effect; but let us be grateful for such a boon to mankind."—*Wilberforce's Practical Christianity*, p. 240—243.

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We must now proceed to consider the doctor's arguments for the just limitation of this principle; and these I think are sufficiently cogent to lead us to conclude that it has a much closer alliance to vice than virtue, and ought to be abandoned. Extinction, however, is not contemplated by the doctor. His design is to preserve the magical power of praise, though at some sacrifice. He observes—

"While the love of praise is admitted to be a natural, and in so many respects a useful, principle of action, it is entitled to no more than our secondary regard. It has its boundary set; by transgressing which, it is at once transformed from an innocent into a most dangerous passion. More sacred and venerable principles claim the chief direction of human conduct. All the good effects which we have ascribed to the desire of praise are produced by it when remaining in a subordinate station. But when, passing its natural line, it becomes the ruling spring of conduct; when the regard which we pay to the opinions of men encroaches on that reverence which we owe to the voice of conscience and the sense of duty; the love of praise, having then gone out of its proper place, instead of improving corrupts, and instead of elevating debases, our nature. The proportion which this passion holds to other principles of action is what renders it either innocent or criminal. The crime with which the Jewish rulers are charged in the text was not that they loved the praise of men, but that they loved it *more than the praise of God.* What a wise and good man ought to study is, to preserve his mind free from any such solicitude concerning praise, as may be in hazard of overcoming his sense of duty. The approbation of men he may wish to obtain, as far as is consistent with the approbation of God. But, when both cannot be enjoyed together, there ought to be no suspense. He is to retire contented with the testimony of a good conscience; and to show, by the firmness of his

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behaviour, that in the cause of truth and virtue he is superior to all opinion.

"1. The praise of men is not an object of such value in itself as to be entitled to become the *leading* principle of conduct. We degrade our character when we allow it more than subordinate regard. Like other worldly goods, it is apt to dazzle us with a false lustre; but, if we would ascertain its true worth, let us reflect both on whom it is bestowed, and from whom it proceeds. Were the applause of the world always the reward of merit; were it appropriated to such alone as by real abilities, or by worthy actions, are entitled to rise above the crowd; we might justly be flattered by possessing a rare and valuable distinction. But how far is this from being the case in fact! How often have the despicable and the vile, by dexterously catching the favour of the multitude, soared upon the wings of popular applause; while the virtuous and the deserving have been either buried in obscurity, or obliged to encounter the attacks of unjust reproach? Let the man who is vain of public favour be humbled by the reflection, that, in the midst of his success, he is mingled with a crowd of impostors and deceivers, of hypocrites and enthusiasts, of ignorant pretenders and superficial reasoners, who, by various arts, have attained as high a rank as himself in temporary fame.

"We may easily be satisfied that applause will be often shared by the undeserving, if we allow ourselves to consider from whom it proceeds. A mixed multitude of men, who in their whole conduct are guided by humour and caprice far more than by reason; who admire false appearances, and pursue false gods; who inquire superficially and judge rashly; whose sentiments are for the most part erroneous, always changeable, and often inconsistent. And is it to such judges as these that you submit the supreme direction of your conduct? Do you stoop to court their favour as your chief distinction when an object of so much

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juster and higher ambition is presented to you in the praise of God? God is the only unerring judge of what is excellent. His approbation alone is the substance, all other praise is but the shadow, of honour. The character which you bear in his sight is your only real one. How contemptible does it render you to be indifferent with respect to this, and to be solicitous about a name only, a fictitious, imaginary character, which has no existence except in the opinions of a few weak and credulous men around you!

"Consider, further, how narrow and circumscribed in its limits that fame is which the vain-glorious man so eagerly pursues. In order to show him this, I shall not bid him reflect that it is confined to a small district of the earth; I shall not desire him to consider that, in the gulf of oblivion, where all human materials are swallowed up, his name and fame must soon be inevitably lost; but let him calmly reflect that within the narrow boundaries of that country to which he belongs, and during that small portion of time which his life fills up, his reputation, great as he may fancy it to be, occupies no more than an inconsiderable corner. Multitudes of those among whom he dwells are totally ignorant of his name and character: many imagine themselves too important to regard him; and, where his reputation is in any degree spread, it has often been attacked, and rivals are daily rising to abate it.

"From all these considerations it clearly appears that though the esteem of our fellow-creatures be pleasing, and the pursuit of it, in a moderate degree, be fair and lawful, yet it affords no such object to desire as entitles it to be a ruling principle.

"2. An excessive love of praise never fails to undermine the regard due to conscience, and to corrupt the heart. It turns off the eye of the mind from the ends which it ought chiefly to keep in view, and sets up a false light for its guide. Its influence is the more dangerous, as the colour

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which it assumes is often fair; and its garb and appearance are nearly allied to that of virtue. The love of glory, I before admitted, may give birth to actions which are both splendid and useful. But constancy and steadiness are to be looked for from him only whose conduct is regulated by a sense of what is right; *whose praise is not of men, but of God;* whose motive to discharge his duty is always the same. Change, as much as you please, the situation of such a man; let applause or let censure be his lot; let the public voice, which this day has extolled him, to-morrow as loudly decry him; on the tenor of his behaviour these changes produce no effect. Whereas the apparent virtues of that man whose eye is fixed on the world, are precarious and temporary. Supported only by circumstances, occasions, and particular regards, they fluctuate and fall with these.

"3. This passion, when it becomes predominant, most commonly defeats its own end, and deprives men of the honour which they are so eager to gain. Without preserving liberty and independence, we can never command respect. That servility of spirit which subjects us to the opinion of others, and renders us tributaries to the world for the sake of applause, is what all mankind despise. They look up with reverence to one who, unawed by their censures, acts according to his own sense of things, and follows the free impulse of an honourable mind. But him who hangs totally on their judgment they consider as their vassal. They even enjoy a malignant pleasure in humbling his vanity, and withholding that praise which he is seen to court.

"4. As an immoderate passion for human praise is dangerous to virtue, and unfavourable to true honour, so it is destructive of self-enjoyment and inward peace. Walking uprightly we walk surely, because we tread an even and open path. But he who turns aside from the straight road of duty, in order to gain applause, involves himself in an

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intricate labyrinth. His mind will be always on the stretch. He will be obliged to listen with anxious attention to every whisper of the popular voice. The demands of those masters whom he has submitted to serve will prove frequently contradictory and inconsistent. He has prepared a yoke for his neck which he must resolve to bear, how much soever it may gall him. Conscience will, from time to time, remind him of the improper sacrifices which he has made, and of the forfeiture which he has incurred of the praise of God, for the sake of praise from men. Suppose him to receive all the rewards which the mistaken opinion of the world can bestow, its loudest applause will often be unable to drown the upbraidings of an inward voice; and if a man is reduced to be ashamed of himself, what avails it to him to be caressed by others? But in truth the reward towards which he looks who proposes human praise as his ultimate object will be always flying like a shadow before him. So capricious and uncertain, so fickle and mutable, is the favour of the multitude, that it proves the most unsatisfactory of all pursuits in which men can be engaged. He who sets his heart on it is preparing for himself perpetual mortifications. If the greatest and best can seldom retain it long, we may easily believe that from the vain and undeserving it will suddenly escape.

"5. The advantages which redound from the praise of men, are not such as can bear to be put in competition with those which flow from the praise of God. The former are necessarily confined within the verge of our present existence; the latter follow us beyond the grave, and extend through all eternity. Not only is the praise of men limited in its effects to this life, but also to particular situations of it. In the days of health and ease it may brighten the sunshine of prosperity; it may then soothe the ear with pleasing accents, and gratify the imagination with fancied triumphs. But, when the distressful seasons of life arrive,



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it will be found altogether hollow and unsubstantial: and, surely, the value of any possession is to be chiefly estimated by the relief which it can bring us in the time of our greatest need.

"These arguments clearly show the importance of preserving the love of praise under proper subordination to the principle of duty. In itself it is a useful motive to action; but, when allowed to extend its influence too far, it corrupts the whole character, and produces guilt, disgrace, and misery. To be entirely destitute of it is a defect; to be governed by it is depravity. The proper adjustment of the several principles of action in human nature is a matter that deserves our highest attention; for, when any one of them becomes either too weak or too strong, it endangers both our virtue and our happiness."

Such are the arguments of Dr. Blair against the immoderate love of praise, yet he yields not to the force of his own arguments; he retracts not from his first position, that, under proper limits, it is an *allowable principle* on the ground of that good which it may produce. He admits that it may weaken virtue—that it may associate with vice and criminality; yet he will not abandon it. That this good may be done he would hazard the individual who is to effect it; the good must be done whatever it costs. The adventurer is to be armed at all points, but go he must. Never was there such a trial to the principles of a public man, to his real honour and his everlasting safety. Could we summon the spectres of some unhappy beings from another world, who on earth pursued the phantom of popular applause, and could we hear them tell the history of their error, and all the fatal consequences bound up in it, we should be appalled at the thought of still following the delusion by which they were ruined. Or could we call from heaven some pardoned spirit, that had been caught in the snare of popular applause, would he not say, "O venture not upon that intoxicating draught; nearly I

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had been destroyed by it. At the first it appeared an innocent joy, but by degrees it insinuated itself, and by slow progress grew till it nearly obtained the mastery of all my principles; my spirit swelled in its own importance; I looked on the multitudes of those who praised me on both sides the Atlantic; nay, wherever my fame reached, wonder followed. It is true my ministry was blessed above the common rank of favorites, but withal at dreadful discount of my Christian character!"*

It must, I think, be apparent to every Christian mind that the good in human applause is lost in the volumes of smoke and mischief attending it: but if the thing itself were right in the sight of God, and warranted by the gospel, all that could be accumulated together against it should not prevent our resorting to it as an arm of power. If the splendid account of its brilliant acts had been supported by one unequivocal direction, or one pure example of the gospel, it would merit attention; but in the gospel nothing of the kind is to be found. On the contrary, when the opportunity so fairly presented itself to our Lord Jesus Christ, as appears by Dr. Blair's text, to place this affair on its true basis—to give to human praise its exact value, to direct the judgment of his followers concerning it, as to what degree of influence it ought to possess over our actions, and with what limitations we might indulge it—not a word, not the most distant intimation, is given that it possessed any value whatever. He did not say that the praise of men was an excellent incentive to action, and commendable when properly restrained; on the contrary, he ordered a record to be made that the lovers of praise were amongst his enemies. But there was another opportunity in our Lord's life that determines the matter. When Peter and John desired pre-eminence, they were rebuked; he declared

* See Bickersteth, p. 169, and Owen's Works, vol. vii., p. 472, and Pulpit, vol i., p. 156.

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that he would allow of no pre-eminence; and that if any one seized it, he should be abased; and that, except our humility resembled that of a little child, we should in no wise belong to his kingdom. It is clear that in the gospel we learn that the extinction of this spirit of self-importance is to be effected, that no flesh should glory in God's presence; and, though the passions are not to be extirpated, yet they are to be turned completely into a new direction.

But it may be said that "religion does accommodate itself, in some measure, to circumstances; and, where the cause of the gospel may be promoted by a little popularity, it is quite necessary to desire it." Is then religion seeking an alliance of a really discreditable character? Has Christ left his church so destitute of powers and energies that a mere human passion can help it, must help it, if upheld in its due station? This were truly deplorable, and, by accepting a merely human help, we should be like the kings of Judah and Israel, who sought alliance among the heathen nations—the spear of which would wound the hand that took it. But has Christ left his church destitute of energies? If he had, he had left his people comfortless; but he says, "I will not leave you comfortless;" "my power and my presence shall be with you." And what are the true energies of the gospel? are they not *holy love* and *burning zeal* for the glory of the gospel and the good of mankind? Did these ever fail when duly sought, when duly relied on? Did not these principles bring the Saviour from heaven? Did not the love of Christ constrain, urge, push forward with an irresistible impetus, the apostle Paul? Did he not by this plant the standard of the cross throughout the Roman empire? Was he not at the same time and throughout his life one of the most humble characters that ever adorned the Christian church? Fame he did indeed acquire; but how did this come about? It followed his exertions, but did not lead the way: it was an

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ordained consequence that blessed his memory. He sought not popular applause; and, when he had found the result, he was not elated, but said it was "not I, but the grace of God that was with me." And, generally, there is no doubt that the more gifts, the more popularity, the more effect produced, the more humility will be produced when the soul is in a perfectly healthy state. And so, no doubt, our exaltation in heaven will be the very cause of increased humility; and here, on earth, it is only the corruptions of nature that prevent this effect.

> "The more thy glories strike mine eyes,
> The humbler I shall lie." WATTS.

Paul did not despise his reputation in the churches, but feeling the power of his influence he made it subserve the glory of his Master. It was a treasure that fell into his hands, and he devoted it to the service of the gospel.

And even if applause should never follow our exertions in the same or any degree, yet we must "commit ourselves in well-doing to him that judgeth righteously." We must live above the expectancy of applause; nay, we must suppose that an unjust world will withhold it—power may suppress it—envy may stifle it—and we must even wait the discoveries of the great day of final account to receive that praise which comes from God. "Even now we must rise on the wings of contemplation until the praises and censures of men die away upon our ear, and the still small voice of conscience is no longer drowned by the din of this nether world. Here the sight is apt to be occupied with earthly objects, and the hearing to be engrossed with earthly sounds; but there we shall come within the view of that resplendent and incorruptible crown which is held forth to our acceptance in the realms of light, and our ear shall be regaled with heavenly melody. Here we dwell in a variable atmosphere: the prospect is at one time darkened

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by the gloom of disgrace, and at another the eye is dazzled by the gleamings of glory; but, ascended above this inconstant region, no storms agitate, no clouds obscure the air; the lightnings play and the thunders roll beneath."

If I should be so happy in this representation of the apparent good in human applause, together with its emulating. flirting qualities on the one hand, and on the other the overwhelming dead weight of the bad, as to determine any wavering mind to seek the extirpation for ever of such a destructive principle from his heart, and to determine him to pursue the only right path to honour, to be watchful and vigilant against the risings of corrupt nature, from which all desire of praise springs up—if such should be the result, I shall think myself fully rewarded, and my joy will be great.

Energies or impetus I know the preacher must have; but, since the choice lies before us to take the power from heathen or evangelical store, we cannot hesitate how to determine. If any real revival is to be witnessed, of which we hear so much, it must be effected by evangelical means. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ:" 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

I have taken no notice whatever of what Dr. Blair or any other says, as to the value of praise in cementing human societies together, because this part of the subject is foreign from my purpose: but, if it were necessary to attach any importance to it, I should only observe that *Christian love* is a far better cement of society than a mere ambition to please. Surely Dr. Blair had forgotten the thirteenth chapter of the first Corinthians: here the whole matter is settled for ever, as to all that is necessary to pro-

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duce universal harmony among mankind; and the New Testament, generally, contains all the truest elements of the social compact, and all the safest means of securing it, that ever the world knew.

I cannot close this Topic respecting the *good* and the *bad*, without requesting the good found in this work may be accepted, and the bad forgiven.

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# LECTURE XXV.

## TOPIC XXI.

### SUPPOSE THINGS.

THIS Topic is principally used in controversy. For example: When you are speaking of the merit of good works, you may take this way of supposition, and say: Let us suppose that Jesus Christ and his apostles held the doctrines of the church of Rome, and that they believed men merited eternal life by their good works: let us suppose that they intended to teach us this doctrine in the Gospels and Epistles. Tell me, I beseech you, if upon this supposition (which is precisely what our adversaries pretend) they ought to have affirmed what they have. Tell me, pray, do you believe yourself well and sufficiently instructed in the doctrine of the merit of good works, when you are told, "When you have done all these things, ye are unprofitable servants?" Again, when the example of a miserable publican is proposed to you, who prays, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" who smites his breast, and dares not lift his eyes to heaven; when he is placed in opposition to a pharisee glorying in his works; and when you are informed, the first went down "to his house justified rather than the other"—when you are told, "if it be by grace, it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace: if it be by works, it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work"—when you are told, "you

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are saved by grace, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God"—when you are assured, you are "justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, not of works, lest any man should boast"—when you hear, that "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness"—when you are taught to believe "the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life"—tell me, I once more entreat you, can you persuade yourself that Jesus Christ and his apostles, by all *these* means, intended to teach you, that man acquires justification, and a right to eternal life, by the merit of his works?

You may also make such suppositions in morality as well as in controversy, in order to give greater weight to your exhortations.

Suppositions are somewhat like mushrooms: they spring up suddenly, and suddenly perish. However, it must be admitted that suppositions, judiciously selected and prepared, may sometimes serve a valuable purpose, by enabling us to place our subjects and arguments in a strong and improved light. We must always take care that our suppositions are dictated by good sense; for of all silly things in the world, a silly supposition is one of the most contemptible imaginable.*

As this Topic appears to belong primarily to controversial subjects, I shall in this view take a short notice of it, and then show, further than I did formerly, that it opens to us a very excellent plan of sermonizing, quite distinct from every other.

With regard to subjects of controversy, suppositions are

* Poetical fictions are suppositions; and so are parables, allegories, and all works of the imagination: these are to be tried by the rules of truth and good sense; and in these suppositions, if good, lies great utility.

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raised to throw the opponent into a dilemma, and to show that his conclusions respecting the thing on hand are irreconcileable with evidences of truth which he cannot but admit, or that they are contrary to common sense; and here it lies with the opponent himself to reconcile the inconsistencies, if he can, before his conclusions can be admitted.

Again: if an opponent maintain the literal sense of a passage of Scripture where a metaphorical sense is intended, a supposition may be so framed as to show that it is contrary to common sense; for instance, Gen. iii. 15: "The seed of the woman shall bruise thy head, and thou [the serpent] shalt bruise his heel." "If we suppose our first parents to understand these words literally, and that God meant them so to be understood, this passage must appear absolutely ridiculous. Do but imagine that you see God coming to *judge* the offenders; Adam and Eve before him in the *utmost distress;* that you hear God inflicting *pains,* and *sorrows,* and *misery,* and *death,* upon the first of the human race; and that, in the midst of all this scene of woe and great calamity, you hear God foretelling, with great solemnity, a very *trivial accident* that should sometimes happen in the world—that serpents would be apt to bite men by the heels, and that men would be apt to revenge themselves by striking them on the head! In the name of common sense, what has *this trifle* to do with the *loss* of mankind, with the corruption of the natural and moral world, and the ruin of all the glory and happiness of the creation? Great comfort it was to Adam, doubtless, after telling him that his days should be short and full of misery, and his end without hope, to let him know that he should now and then knock a snake on the head; but not even that without paying dearly for his poor victory, for the snake should often bite him by the heel. Adam surely could not understand the prophecy in this sense, though some of his sons have so understood it; a plain indication

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how much more some men are concerned to maintain a literal interpretation of Scripture than they are to make it speak common sense."—*Bishop Sherlock's Third Discourse.*

The following suppositions are formed on Gen. xviii. 24—32, by Simeon, Horæ Homil. viii. 20.

Suppose God had said, Find me fifty righteous, or thirty, or twenty, or only ten, and for their sakes I will pardon and save all the rest, we must have perished, because among the whole human race there is not one righteous, no, not one.

Suppose, instead of this, he had said, I will give my Son to die for your past offences, and bring you back to a state of probation, whereby if you fall not again from your righteousness you shall be saved; the offer had been kind, but it would have been useless to *us*. Still, suppose God had said, I foresee that a renewal of your former covenant would be to no purpose, and therefore my Son should work out a righteousness for you, and I require nothing of you but to add to that a righteousness of your own, that the two righteousnesses together may form a joint ground of acceptance with me; alas! we should have been in as deplorable a state as before.

But suppose God yet further lowered his demands as to say, I will give you a complete salvation through the blood and righteousness of my dear Son, and I will require nothing of you, but only to render yourselves worthy of it; still our case had been altogether helpless.

This was well known to God, therefore he proposed none of these things: he required only that we should believe in his Son, and accept freely what he freely offers. It is true that if even this depended on ourselves we should perish, because without help we cannot even believe; still this is the condition which alone is suited to our helpless state, because it implies a total renunciation of all merit and

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strength in ourselves, and leads to Christ that we may find our all in him.

A few examples of division on this Topic shall now be adduced.

No. 1.—Lavington, vol. i., p. 25, on Heb. xi. 4: "He, being dead, yet speaketh." The text is not strictly adhered to, but treated as a mere motto. The plan of the sermon is founded upon sundry suppositions, as to what the deceased would speak if she were in the place of the preacher. The preacher says, "I shall consider myself as her mouth to you. Hark, hark! she speaks! she says,

I. Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children.

Hark! she speaks again.

II. Seek the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, in the first place.

Hark! she speaks again.

III. Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with *all thy might*.

Yet again she says,

IV. I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, &c.

On each of these topics he speaks eloquently, and then concludes with several important reflections. Here then you have a sermon upon suppositions.

No. 2.—On Zeph. iii. 17: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save. He will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love; he will rejoice over thee."

I. Suppose the people of God to fear, as Moses did, that God would depart from them: here the divine presence is declared, as Matt. xviii. 20; Josh. i. 5. Further, the text says, "He will rest in his love."

II. Suppose an individual to fear his own salvation: the text says, "He will save."

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III. Suppose they should fear that their comforts would be withheld, as 2 Sam. xiv. 28: the text says, "He will rejoice over you with joy:" Isa. liv. 7—10, &c.

No. 3.—The following has been ascribed to the late Mr. Newton; it is on 1 Cor. x. 13: "There hath no temptation [trial] taken you but such as is common to man," &c. The people of the Lord are apt to suppose,

I. That their trial is singular. The text says the contrary.

II. That though they pray, yet they shall not be delivered. The text says, God "will make a way for their escape."

III. That they shall not be able to bear the affliction during its continuance. The text says they shall "*be able* to bear it."

No. 4.—An author whose name I will not quote again, at least I think I will not, has the following passage on Luke xvi. 31: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one should rise from the dead."

Rise from the dead! to what purpose? what could such a messenger propose or urge which had not been proposed and urged already? The novelty or surprise of such a visit is what might awaken the attention of a curious, unthinking people, who spent their time in nothing else but to hear and tell of some new thing: but, ere the wonder was well over, some new wonder would start up in its room, and then the man might return to the dead from whence he came, and not a soul would make one inquiry about him.

This I fear would be the conclusion of the affair. But, to bring this matter still closer to us, let us imagine (or suppose), if there be nothing unworthy in it, that God in compliance with a curious world—or from a better motive, in compassion to a sinful one—should vouchsafe to send one from the dead. Now bear with me, I beseech you, in

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forming such an address as I suppose would be most likely to gain our attention, and conciliate the heart to what he had to say.

1. Suppose this messenger to urge our *interest :* he might tell us, after the most indisputable credentials of whom he served, that he was come a messenger from the great God of heaven, with reiterated proposals whereby much was to be granted us on his side, and something to be parted with on ours; but that, not to alarm us, it was neither houses nor lands, it was neither wives, nor children, nor brethren, which we had to forsake, no one rational pleasure to be given up, no natural endearment to be torn from. In a word, he would tell us we had nothing to part with but what it was *not* for our interest to keep, and that was our *sins*, which had brought death and misery to our doors. He would go on and prove, by a thousand arguments, that to be temperate, and chaste, and just, and peaceable, and charitable, and kind one to another, was only doing that for *Christ's* sake which was most for our own; and that, were we in a capacity of capitulating with God upon what terms we would submit to his government, he would convince us it would be impossible for the wit of man to frame any proposals more for our present interest than to lead *an uncorrupted life*, to do the thing that was *lawful* and *right*, and lay such restraints upon our appetites as are for the honour of human nature and the refinement of human happiness.

2. Suppose the spectre to address himself to the other passions. In doing this he could but give us the most engaging ideas of the perfections of God; nor could he do more than impress the most awful ones of his majesty and power? He might remind us that we are creatures but of a day, hastening to the place whence we shall not return; that during our stay we stood accountable to this Being, who, though rich in mercy, was yet terrible in judgments; that he took notice of all our actions; that he was about our paths, and about our beds, and spied out all our ways;

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and was so pure in his nature that he would punish even the wicked imagination of our hearts, and had appointed a day wherein he would enter into this inquiry. He might add:—but what? with all the eloquence of an inspired tongue, what could he add or say to us which has not been said before? The experiment has been tried a thousand times upon the hopes and fears, the reasons and passions of men, by all the powers of nature, the application of which have been so great, and the variety of addresses so unanswerable, that there is not a greater paradox in the world than that so good a religion should be no better recommended by its professors.

This is a fine specimen of suppositions. I have given them at length to show you how they may be conducted. We are naturally led to one remark: if such be the condition of man, we may well say, nothing short of the Holy Spirit's work can rouse him from the death of sin, since messengers from the dead, though they were to exhibit the most impressive view of the glories of heaven and the flames of hell, would have no more than a temporary effect without this holy aid. We must, however, endeavour by suppositions, and any and all other means, to arouse attention, always looking to God for a divine blessing.

No. 5.—Beddome, vol. ii., p. 150, makes a good use of this Topic in the first part of his sermon on Gal. vi. 7: "Be not deceived." "We hope," says he, "that all is right, but *suppose* we should be mistaken." He then forms his first principal head by saying, "Let us consider some of the instances in which we are liable to be deceived. These instances are in fact suppositions, and so I shall denominate them. Then,

I. Suppose some instances in which we are liable to be deceived; for men are much liable to deceptions.

1. One can easily perceive that those are deceived who think lightly of sin.

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2. We think the same of those who affect or pretend that we make too great a stir about sin.

3. Some amuse themselves with thoughts of a death-bed repentance; they suppose that, as the thief upon the cross found favour, so may they.

4. We readily suppose that some of you call good evil, and *vice versâ*, or think their state to be good while it is stark naught.

II. Consider the evil and danger of self-deception.

Which is shown in several particulars.

No. 6.—The same author takes up this Topic in the second and principal division of his discourse, vol. i., p. 48, on Jer. xiii. 27: "O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?"

I. The question itself.

1. It is of great importance to be cleansed from the filth of sin.

2. Cleansing is the work of God.

3. He has much at heart as to this point.

4. Our unwillingness greatly obstructs it.

5. But does not utterly prevent it.

II. Let us consider (*i. e.* by way of supposition) the various answers which will be made to the question before us: "Wilt thou not be made clean? when shall it once be?"

1. It can easily be supposed that some of you are willing to be delivered from the punishment of sin, but not from its power—you will be justified, but not sanctified.

2. It may be imagined, without any breach of charity, that some of you would be cleansed outwardly only.

3. It can easily be conceived that some of you would be made partly clean, but not wholly so.

4. Others would probably wish to be made clean, but they do not like God's way of doing it, or the means he uses.

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5. Others would be cleansed, but *not yet*, as Austin.*

6. May we be allowed to suppose a case still worse, where the determined in wickedness openly say, We will not be cleansed at all.

7. But turn to the real Christian, ask him the question: a good answer is ready immediately; he cries out with the Psalmist (Ps. li. 2), "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin."

This outline furnishes an opportunity for unravelling the secret wiles of the human heart; and our author proceeds to answer these several suppositions in a sensible and judicious manner.

No. 7.—We may adopt Davies, vol. ii., p. 414, on Mark xii. 6: "They will reverence my son." Part of this sermon suits our purpose. In selecting we say, If we consider the unworthiness of our guilty world, and the high character of the blessed Jesus, we could have but little reason to expect that he would come into our world as a Saviour; but,

I. Suppose he should come; suppose he should leave all his glory to become a messenger of grace; suppose, I say, such a wonder as this is to be realized, might it not be reasonably expected that we should universally receive him with open arms?

II. Suppose he so came for particular, specific, and all-gracious purposes, and sustained characters agreeable to the designs upon which he came.

1. Suppose he came as our *only deliverer*, how grateful should we be!

2. If he came as our great *high-priest*, surely it might be expected that we should place our whole dependance on his atonement: and in the same manner with respect to all his redeeming acts.

* It is stated by Austin that he so prayed, being desirous of retaining his besetting sin a little longer.



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These examples are quite sufficient to show the utility of the Topic in division; and I am not a little gratified at the discovery of them, because it adds to that variety of arrangement which I have endeavoured to establish. But, I repeat, great care must be taken to distinguish between what is *implied* or *inferred*, agreeably with the fifth Topic, and what is only *supposable*, according to this twenty-first Topic. It requires also a nice discrimination to determine when it is proper to have recourse to suppositions, and especially when to form divisions in whole or in part upon them, which now we are to consider.

I should think it proper upon such a text as Jer. viii. 15: "We looked for peace, but no good came; for a time of health, and behold trouble." There must be some supposable considerations to reconcile this with the goodness of God, who has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants; and if we refer to Jer. xiv. 19, 20, we are furnished with them; as again we find Isa. lix. 2: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God;" and verses 9, 10. Now in such a case as this enter your first principal thus,

I. The things that are *supposed* in the text, viz. sins, &c.

II. The matter of the text itself.

There are also several supposable truths connected in our ideas with the text, Jer. viii. 15, though there is nothing which can properly be considered as implied: when you have discovered this difference you will know more than a great many who may set themselves up for your superiors.

In conclusion, allow me to say that we must never come to the Scriptures for instruction bringing our suppositions with us. This is a most frequent, but a most pernicious, practice. Whatever these suppositionists meet with in Scripture that agrees with their previously formed ideas, they praise to the utmost; but when they meet with pas-

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sages and doctrines which their previous notions do not allow them to receive, then we hear a tale: This is a mystery, or a mere strong figurative expression; it cannot exactly mean what it says, because God would never ask our belief of a thing so repugnant to human reason, and so contrary to other expressed passages of God's word, &c.



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# LECTURE XXVI.

## TOPIC XXII.

### GUARD AGAINST OBJECTIONS.

THERE are very few texts of Scripture where this Topic may not be made use of; and it is needless to mention examples, they will occur to every one without much reflection.

Remark, however, objections must be natural and popular, not far-fetched, nor too philosophical; in a word, they must be such as it is absolutely necessary to observe and refute.

They must be proposed in a clear and simple style, without rhetorical exaggerations, yet not unadorned nor unaffecting.

I think it is never advisable to state objections, and defer the answers to them till another opportunity; answer them directly, forcibly, and fully.

Here it may be asked, whether, in stating objections to be answered, it be proper to propose them altogether at once, and then come to the answers; or whether they should be proposed and answered one by one? I suppose discretional good sense must serve for both guide and law upon this subject. If three or four objections regard only one part of the text, if each may be proposed and answered in a few words, it would not be amiss to propose

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these objections all together, distinguishing them, however, by first, second, third;—this may be done agreeably; but if these objections regard *different* parts of the text, or different matters, if they require to be proposed at full length, and if it would also take some time to answer them, it would be impertinence to propose them all together: in such a case they must be proposed and answered apart.

Mr. Robinson says, in a note on this Topic, "There is as much reason for giving this advice to preachers as there is for saying to an architect going to build, Guard against winds and storms: you build in summer and retire; but your building must stand abroad all the winter. It would be folly to suppose that any religious truth, how demonstrable soever, could stand in this world free from objections. For all truths touch somebody's creed; and when you touch their bone and their flesh, it is well if they curse you not to your face." I submit, however, that we may be over tenacious: our business is not always with gainsayers; if these contradict, let us go on preaching the truth, living upon its comforts, and guiding our course by its light. Yet occasions there are to regard our Topic. Claude recommends us to notice only such objections as are of a popular kind, leaving the cavils of very learned and abstruse opponents to other hands; and with regard to such as ought to be noticed, it must be done with candour and clearness of argument, such as the people can understand.

The following discourse of Bishop Sherlock furnishes a complete example of guarding against objections. It is founded on the *objections* of infidels to the gospel of Christ as unnecessary to man's happiness, which they contend is sufficiently and better secured in the general mercy of God, such as we must conceive of that attribute by our natural ap-

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prehensions. In this discourse the good bishop goes to the very bottom of the argument, and completely overturns the objections advanced, and at the same time establishes the truth in a very edifying manner. His text is John iii. 16: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

In this passage of Scripture, and in many others, the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ is ascribed to the goodness and love of God towards mankind. Whatever other difficulties men may find in the gospel, one would suppose that it might be admitted to be, at least, a good representation of the divine mercy towards mankind, and fully to display that tenderness and compassion to our weaknesses and infirmities which we all hope for, and with some reason expect to receive from our great Creator, whose "tender mercies are over all his works."

The case being so, who would expect to hear any objections against the gospel derived from the topics of divine mercy and goodness? Yet some there are who think the mercy of the gospel to be imperfect, and that nature gives far better hopes to all her children. They conceive the infirmities of human nature to be unavoidable, and the mercy of God to be infinite; and from these considerations they raise hopes as unbounded as they conceive mercy to be. As they derive these strong assurances from natural reason, they conceive all promises of mercy to be unnecessary, and therefore to be suspected; and the argument is worked up, not only to be an objection against the gospel revelation, but against all revelations either past or to come.

There is nothing of more consequence to the credit and authority of revelation than to reconcile it to the natural notions and the natural hopes and expectations of mankind; and indeed the promises of the gospel and the

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hopes of nature are founded on the same common principles. Ask a Christian, Why did God redeem mankind by sending his Son into the world? He must answer, Because men were sinners, weak and miserable, and unable to rescue themselves from their wretched condition. Ask what moved God to express so much concern for such worthless objects? He must resolve it into the goodness, and tenderness, and paternal affection of God, with which he embraces all the sons of men.

Ask the Deist upon what grounds he has hope and confidence towards God? He will reply that he conceives it impossible for a beneficent being to be rigorous and severe towards the crimes and follies of such weak, foolish, and impotent creatures as men; that their iniquities, though against the light of nature, yet flow from a defect in the powers of nature; since 'tis no man's fault that he is not stronger, or wiser, or better, than he was made to be, therefore, though the light of reason renders him accountable for his actions, yet his want of power to do what his reason approves will make his defects excusable in the sight of his equitable Judge.

See how nearly natural religion and the gospel are allied in the foundation of their hopes and expectations. 'Tis pity such near friends, who have one common interest, should have any disputes. But disputes there are.

Far be it from us to weaken the hopes of nature. The gospel is no enemy to these hopes; so far otherwise, that all the hopes and expectations of nature are so many preparations to the gospel of Christ, and lead us to embrace that mercy offered by Christ which nature so long and so earnestly has sought after. But the question is, whether these natural hopes can give us such security of pardon, and of life and immortality, as will justify us in rejecting the light of revelation? Now whoever depends on the forgiveness of God, admits himself to be in a case that wants pardon; that is, admits himself to be a sinner.

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This being the case of mankind in general, let it be considered,

First, That natural religion could not be originally founded on the consideration of man's being a sinner, and in the expectation of pardon.

Secondly, That the hopes which we are able to form in our present circumstances are too weak and imperfect to give us entire satisfaction.

Thirdly, That the coming of Christ has supplied these defects, and has perfected and completed the hopes of nature.

It must be allowed that the original religion of nature was agreeable to the original state of nature; and consequently, if natural religion is founded in the consideration of man's sin and weakness, it follows that man was originally formed a sinner and weak.

But further. Supposing men made originally to be what we see they are, upon what grounds are we to hope for an alteration for the better? For, if it was consistent with God's goodness to put men into this state originally, how is it inconsistent with his goodness to continue that state which was at first his own appointment? He could no more act inconsistently with his goodness at the beginning of the world, than he can at the end of it. If reason therefore admits the present state of the world to be of God's appointment, it must never afterwards pretend to entertain hopes of being delivered from it, and without such hopes all religion is vain and useless.

It may be thought, perhaps, that supposing the present state of things to be of God's appointment, we cannot be answerable for what we do; for why should he blame us for doing the work he has appointed? Allow this reasoning, yet no religion can be built upon it; for it can go no further than to say that we ought not to be punished for our doings: it can never show that we have any title to be put into a better state: the utmost it can pretend to prove

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is, that we are absolutely unaccountable; and if so, there is nothing we can do to less purpose than to trouble our heads about religion.

Further, if the laws of nature are the precepts of natural religion, as without all doubt they are, it follows that natural religion can be nothing else but obedience to the laws of nature, and consequently the genuine hopes of natural religion must be founded in obedience. This must necessarily be the case; for all laws are made to be obeyed. No prince was ever so absurd as to make laws with this view, that his subjects might break them, and he show his goodness in pardoning their transgressions; and yet this must have been the scheme of Providence, if natural religion was nothing else from the beginning but an expectation of pardon for sin.

Secondly, let us take a view of our present state without inquiring whether any and what change has happened to put us into this condition; and let us consider what may be expected from our present circumstances. Two things may be affirmed with certainty of the present condition of mankind: one is, that they have a sense of their obligation to obey the laws of reason and nature, which is evident from the force of natural conscience; the other is, that very few do in any tolerable degree, and none perfectly, pay this obedience.

Let us examine then how religion will stand upon these circumstances. It is impossible to found the hopes of religion on innocence and obedience; for obedience is not paid. On the other hand, absolute impunity cannot be claimed for all sins, much less can any degree of happiness, either present or future, be claimed on behalf of offenders. The utmost probability to which human reason can arrive in this case is, that—the goodness of God and the weakness of man considered—God may favourably accept our endeavours, how imperfect soever our attainments may be. But is this reasoning built on



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infallible principles? Can any certainty or security arise out of this? Any that can give rest or peace to the mind of man, ever inquisitive after futurity? Will you promise impunity to offenders upon repentance? Impunity, mere impunity, is not the thing that nature seeks after; she craves something more. But can the argument for divine mercy be carried further? Is it not great mercy to pardon sinners? Can you with decency desire a reward for them? Our Saviour tells us that, when we have done our best, "we are but unprofitable servants:" and if we reflect that all our natural powers are the gift of God, and consequently our best services are but a debt paid to the donor; if we consider that in all we do there is no profit to the Most High, that his power and majesty are not exalted by our services, nor lessened by our neglect; we shall find that our own reason teaches the same lesson, and that when we confess ourselves unprofitable servants, we give greater evidence of our understanding than of our humility. And if this be truly the case, what are the claims of natural religion? Are they not the claims of unprofitable servants? the claims of those to whom nothing is due?

Thirdly, let us now take a view of the conditions and promises of the gospel, and see if we have any reason to be offended at them. As to the laws which are made the conditions of our happiness, they are not new impositions, but as old as reason itself, and the very same which natural religion stands bound to obey. Here then can be no complaint; at least no just one. So far then we are quite safe that we can be no losers by the gospel, since it lays no new burden on us. In all other respects our case is extremely altered for the better. We feel ourselves easily tempted to do wrong, and unable to pay the obedience we owe to righteousness. Hopes therefore from our innocence we have none, but are forced to have recourse to the mercy of God. Now this mercy, which we hope for,

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the gospel offers in the name of God. Have we any reason to suspect the offer? or to reject that very mercy, when promised by God, which our own reason teaches us to expect at his hands?

If we sin, nature has no refuge but in repentance, and how far that will go we know not: nature has not, cannot teach us this knowledge. From the gospel we learn that true repentance shall never be in vain; shall not only protect us from punishment, but shall also set open to us the doors of immortality. There you may view religion once more restored to its native hope of glory and life for evermore. You will be no longer obliged to wander in the mazes and intricacies of human reason, and to speculate upon the attributes of divine mercy and justice, the limits and boundaries of which are not to be determined by the wit of man, and the contemplation of which abounds with terrors as well as hopes: but you may see the clear and immutable purpose of God to give salvation to all who, with penitent hearts and a firm reliance on his word, endeavour after righteousness.

One would imagine the gospel should easily find credit with men, when all its promises do so exactly tally and correspond with the hopes of nature. Has nature any reason to complain of this? Is it an objection to the gospel that it has confirmed all your hopes and expectations, that it has given you the security of God's promise to establish the very wishes of your heart? You trust, you say, that he who made you still retains some love for you. To convince you that he does, he has sent his well-beloved Son into the world to save sinners. Though you offend, yet you hope, on repentance, to be forgiven; the gospel confirms this hope: the terms of it are more beneficial, and convey to true penitents not only hope but a claim to pardon. But pardon only will not satisfy. There is still something further that nature craves, something which with unutterable groans she pants after,

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even life and happiness for evermore. She sees all her children go down to the grave: all beyond the grave is to her one wide waste, a land of doubt and uncertainty: when she looks into it, she has her hopes and she has her fears; and, agitated by the vicissitudes of these passions, she finds no ground whereon to rest her foot. How different is the scene which the gospel opens! There we see the heavenly Canaan, the new Jerusalem; in which city of the great God there are mansions, many mansions, for receiving those "who, through faith, and patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality." Our blessed Saviour has abolished death, and redeemed us into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, that we may dwell in his presence as long as time itself shall last.

If we were to form a system of religion for ourselves, that should answer to all our wishes and desires, what more could we ask for ourselves than what the gospel has offered? The obedience required of us is the same to which we are antecedently bound, in virtue of that reason and understanding which makes us to be men. The promises of the gospel extend to more than nature could ever claim. They take in all her wishes, establish all her hopes, and they are offered by a hand that is able to make them good.

The conclusion of the whole is this, that since the religion of a sinner must necessarily be founded in the hopes of mercy—since these hopes have at best but uncertain foundation in natural religion, and are liable to be disturbed and shaken by frequent doubts and misgivings of mind—we have great reason to bless and adore the goodness of God, who has openly displayed before our eyes the love that he has to the children of men, by sending "his well-beloved Son into the world, that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—*Bishop Sherlock's Fifth Discourse.*

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When it is not the preacher's intention to dwell upon the objections which may be made to any statement or doctrine which he is discussing, but merely to notice them *en passant*, the proper place of doing this will generally be found in the exordium. Several examples of this kind will be given in the Lectures on EXORDIUMS at the end of this volume; and, instead of giving more examples of the Topic here, I shall turn aside to consider a species of objections to which I think it will be important for every student to pay some attention, in order that he may be prepared to manage them, viz., the objections which many Christians advance against themselves, as to their being believers in Christ. Our old puritan divines were not only careful to guard against objections to their doctrines, but also prompt in replying to the religious fears of Christians touching their interest in such doctrines, and their acceptance with God, in the broad acceptation of that term.

But perhaps it may be objected that this is a species of writing and preaching which leads into a region of thought suited only to weak minds;* that it allows the inference that religion has some real connexion with a gloomy temper; if not worse still, that it is hardly to be distinguished from a distempered understanding; and that when preachers enter upon these ideas, the greater part of the congregation are rather annoyed than benefited, not knowing what he is about. The matter to be ascertained then is this, whether it can happen that a Christian, who has every reason to rejoice, can fall into a state of doubt as to his final state, or even of the readiness of a gracious Providence to supply his temporary necessities, or any other important affair that may appear to cross him in his course, and throw him into perplexities? And in what manner does religion recognize such a state? These points may very soon be dismissed in a satisfactory manner.

* Dr. Owen says, "I know some there are that dislike discourses of this nature, and look upon them with contempt and scorn. But why they do so I know not."

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If facts are to be consulted, we find that the faith of some Christians is comparatively weak, though genuine, and these evince, to our observation and experience, that they are *doubting Christians;* they doubt in the very thing that other Christians unhesitatingly rely upon, and to the great wonder of others who never felt such inconveniences.

If again we consult the philosophy of the human mind, if a thing offers itself to our notice which it is of infinite importance for us to possess, and the loss of which nothing can compensate; if our minds are at all sensitive, wakeful, considerate, active, full of the thought of this infinite good; it is more than likely that some apprehensions may interpose as to the issue of things, or whether we shall really obtain or miss the blessing. There will be certain vibrations of hope and fear, and the latter may very often preponderate to our real disquietude. In such a case we naturally look for counsel from those of stronger mind, but who, at some former seasons, have suffered from the same cause; and such persons, if they have Christian feelings, will address the case with the wisdom they have acquired, or with what the nature of the case will admit. Private communications are perhaps best on such subjects; but since the distress may be concealed, and since there may be something common in it to very many Christians, it becomes necessary to introduce the subject in public. No doubt this will be all Arabic to many unawakened hearers, who never felt any disturbance upon the subject; yet the course cannot be dispensed with to please such persons as are in a state of tranquillity and deathly repose.

There is nothing necessarily weak or visionary in a discourse of this nature. Would it not be thought strange if our dear friend's very soul was wrapped up in an only son, if such a youth's life was supposed to be in jeopardy, and we did not, to the utmost of our power, endeavour to console such friend with all the rational hopes that the case

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admitted? The anguish and the vibration of mind that the patriarch Jacob suffered, on parting with his beloved Benjamin, are on record. Again: is it strange that the merchant's hopes and fears should be tremblingly alive for the safety of the ship in which his whole property is embarked, and which none either could or would insure? Certainly not. Thus the Christian's everlasting hopes are embarked; and, considering the imperfection of his present state, it is not strange that he should be the subject of intense anxiety, and often of preponderant fears.

We find, from Scripture, that many good people, in every age, have been the subjects of fears; that the prophets, the psalmist, Jesus, and his servants the apostles were anxious to relieve them by precious promises and holy reasonings. Jesus took their persons under his own wing; he was "touched with the feeling of their infirmities;" Heb. iv. 15. "He never breaks the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax;" Matt. xii. 20. He said, "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" Luke xii. 32. Nay, he very tenderly relieved their fears even in providential matters. It is not necessary to multiply citations from Scripture on this subject; but, if you will condescend to listen, a few examples shall be recited drawn from experimental preachers of high and deserved repute, who lived in an age when the sons of consolation abounded.

The usual fears and doubts of Christians generally settle upon what are frequently denominated the evidences of a state of grace, and which are supposed to establish a title to eternal life; now though I may hereafter very freely offer my opinion on this point, yet my present design is to meet the doubts and fears of believers on their own ground, and to show that they are established upon a weakness of judgment and unnecessary severity against themselves. Or perhaps the quotations will do this service for me.

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Our Lord, in his sermon on the mount, lays down eight tokens of a gracious state; Matt. v. If they were eight score, a timorous Christian would establish as many doubts and fears upon them; yet such fears must be met by Christian compassion. Now suppose Matt. v. 6, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness," be the subject selected, Mr. Watson, of Walbrook,* says,

This text may serve to comfort the hearts of those who do hunger and thirst after righteousness; I doubt *not but* it is the grief of many a good man that he cannot be more holy, that he cannot serve God better. "Blessed are *they* that hunger." Though thou hast not so much righteousness as thou wouldst, yet thou art blessed, because *thou* hungerest after it; desire is the best discovery of a Christian. Actions may be counterfeited or compulsory. A man may be forced to that which is good, but not to will that which is good; therefore desire is valuable, and *some* Christians have nothing to show for themselves but *desires;* Neh. i. 11. Let it be observed that hungerings *after* righteousness proceed from love; if thou didst not love Christ, thou couldst not desire him.

Here follow the doubts and fears to be guarded against.

OBJECTION: If my hunger were of the right kind, then I could take the comfort of it, but I fear it is counterfeit; hypocrites have desires.

ANSWER: That I may the better settle a doubting Christian, I shall show the difference between true and false desires, spiritual hunger and carnal.

1. The hypocrite does not desire grace on its own account; he desires it only as a bridge to lead him over to heaven. So Balaam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous;" Numb. xxiii. 10. The believer desires grace on its own account, and Christ for himself purely; not only is heaven precious to him, but Christ: 1 Pet. ii. 7.

* Ejected for nonconformity, 1662.

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2. The hypocrite's desire is conditional; he desires heaven and his sins too: this is his condition. But Christ's condition is such as believers are willing to accede to, be they what they may. The hypocrite desires the *lease*, but not the *fine* of self-denial.

3. The hypocrite's desires are *but desires;* they are destitute of activity: but those of the believer are fervent and active, as Isa. xxvi. 9. He presseth his desires with holy violence (Matt. xi. 12); and, as the eagle desires the prey (Job ix. 26), so true desires carry the soul swiftly to holy ordinances.

4. The hypocrite's desires are transient, or like a hot fit; they are soon over. They commence under some affliction; this over, all is over with him: but true desire is constant. The Greek word is in the participle: "Blessed are they that are *hungering;*" though they have righteousness, yet they are hungering after more. The hypocrite's desire is like the motion of a watch, which soon runs down; but that of the believer is like the beating of the pulse, which lasts as long as life; Ps. cxix. 20. It is like the unextinguished fire of the temple; Lev. vi. 13. "There was," says Cyril, "a mystery in it, to show that we must be ever burning in holy affections."

5. The hypocrite's desires are unseasonable, like that of the foolish virgins, Matt. xxv. 11, &c.; but those of the believer are timely and seasonable: Matt. vi. 33; Ps. lxiii. 1. The wise virgins obtained the oil betimes, before the bridegroom came. Thus we see the difference between a true and false hunger; the former are blessed, and may take the comfort of it.

Objection: But my hunger after righteousness is so weak that I fear it is not of the true kind.

Answer: Though the pulse beats but weakly, yet, if it does beat, it shows there is life. Weak desires are not to be discouraged; there is a promise made to them; Matt. xii. 20. A reed is a weak thing, but especially when it is

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bruised; yet the bruised reed shall not be broken, but, like Aaron's dry rod, it shall bud and blossom. Again: Weak these desires may be, yet the believer may estimate his spiritual state by his judgment as well as by his affections. What is that which thou esteemest most in thy judgment? Is it Christ and grace? Thus Paul exercised his judgment, Phil. iii. 8. &c.

OBJECTION: But, saith the believer, that which eclipses my comfort is this: I have not that earnest hunger that I once had. "O that it were with me as in months that are past!"

ANSWER: It is indeed an ill sign for a person to lose his appetite; but, though it be a sign of the decay of grace to lose the spiritual appetite, yet it is a sign of the truth of grace to bewail the loss. It is sad "to lose our first love," but it is happy when we bemoan it. Again: Though this be the case, yet be not too much discouraged; for in the use of means thy former appetite may be recovered. In natural instances much feeding takes away appetite, but here feeding on ordinances increases it. The text assures you that if you "*hunger*" or "*thirst*" in any degree (for, as the degree is not in the text, if the reality only exists it carries the promise), you shall be filled (Luke i. 53) with grace, peace, joy.

OBJECTION: I have long had unfeigned desires after God, but yet am not filled.

ANSWER: Thou mayest have great grace, yet little comfort: your patience must be exercised; you have the promise, but not the date. The feast is sure; Isa. xxv. 6—9. And, however it may happen here, be assured you shall be filled in heaven; *there* there will be "bread enough and to spare;" and there "the water-pots will be filled to the brim;" John ii. 7.

The following occurs in Watson's sermon on Matt. v. 9: "Blessed are the peace-makers," &c.

The children of God receive manifestations of his love.

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OBJECTION: But God is angry with me, and writes bitter things against me; how does this stand with his love?

ANSWER: God's love and his anger towards his children may stand together; "as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." We have as much need of affliction as ordinances: a bitter pill may be necessary to restore health. Aristotle speaks of a bird that lives amongst thorns, yet sings sweetly. "A fining pot is for the silver, and the furnace for the gold," not for base metal: fiery trials make golden Christians. There is nothing in affliction, or even apparent desertion, that indicates the absence of God's love.

OBJECTION: But sometimes God's children are under the black clouds of desertion; is not this far from love?

ANSWER: This is confessedly a sad, but not a hopeless, case. When the sun is gone down, the dew falls; when the sun-light of God's countenance is removed, tears fall from the eyes of the saints. Job said, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison thereof drinketh up my spirits;" Job vi. 4. Yet the seed of comfort remains; 1 John iii. 9; which is a seed of comfort as well as a seed of purity. Though they see not the seal of the Spirit, yet they have the unction of the Spirit; 1 John ii. 27. Though they want the sun, yet they have the day-star in their hearts. Like the tree in winter, though it loses its leaves and beauty, yet its sap remains in its root; so there is still the sap of grace, which in time will rise up to clothe the soul again with beauty: and God will yet beautify the meek with salvation. In the mean time it is highly satisfactory that there is a high prizing of God's love—a lamenting after him, and willingness to forego any thing for his return.

My next instance is from the same author, on Matt. xii. 20: vol. i. p. 590.

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How shall I know that I am savingly bruised?

ANSWER: Did God ever bring thee upon thy knees Hath thy proud heart been humbled? Didst thou ever see thyself a sinner? Didst thou with sorrow look upon Christ? and did those tears drop from the eye of faith? This is a gospel bruising. Canst thou say, Lord, though I cannot see thee, yet I love thee; though I am in the dark, yet I hope? This is to be a bruised reed.

Then follow the objections and answers.

OBJECTION: But I fear I am not bruised enough.

ANSWER: It is hard to prescribe a just measure of humiliation. It is in the new birth as in the natural, some more painful than others. But would you know when you are bruised enough? It is when your spirit is so troubled that you are willing to let go those lusts which brought in the greatest income of pleasure and delight. It is when sin is not only discarded, but loathed also. The physic is strong enough when it has purged out the disease.

OBJECTION: I fear I am not bruised as I should be; I find my heart so hard.

1st ANSWER: We must distinguish between hardness of heart and a hard heart. The best heart may have some hardness of heart, yet not be a hard heart. Denominations are made from the better part. If we come into a field that has tares and wheat in it, we do not call it a field of tares but a field of wheat; and so in the case upon which we are arguing.

2nd ANSWER: There is a great difference between the hardness of the godly and the wicked; the one is natural, the other accidental. One is the hardness of a stone; the other of ice, which soon dissolves.

3rd ANSWER: Dost thou grieve under this hardness? Thou sighest for want of sighs, and weepest for want of tears.

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This is a Christian paradox; but strictly true.

OBJECTION: But I am a barren reed, I bring forth no fruit; therefore I fear I shall be broken.

ANSWER: Gracious hearts are apt to overlook the good that is in them: they can spy the worm in the leaf, but not the fruit. Why dost thou say thou art barren? If thou art a bruised reed, thou art not barren, The spiritual reed engrafted into the true vine is fruitful. There is so much sap in Christ as makes all who are inoculated into him bear fruit; Christ distils grace, as drops of dew, upon the soul. Hos. xiii. 5, 6: "I will be as the dew upon Israel; he shall grow as the lily, his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree." That God who made the dry reed blossom will make the dry reed flourish.

The following are upon the second part of the text—"the smoking flax."

OBJECTION: But we are bid not to quench the Spirit, 1 Thess. v. 19; which implies loss, and that the smoking flax may be quenched.

ANSWER: We must distinguish between the common work of the Spirit and the sanctifying work; the one may be quenched, not the other. The first is like a picture drawn upon the ice, soon defaced; the second like a carving in gold, which endures. The gifts of the Spirit may be quenched, not the grace. The enlightening of the Spirit may fail, but not his anointing: 1 John ii. 27. The hypocrite's blaze goes out, not so the sparks of grace: the first is the light of the comet, which wastes and evaporates; the other is the light of a star, &c.

OBJECTION: But I cannot see the least light of grace in myself.

ANSWER: Why dost thou dispute thus against thyself? Why no grace? Thou hast more than thou wouldst be willing to part with, even that which thou valuest above the gold of Ophir. How couldst thou see the lustre of this jewel, if the Spirit had not opened thine eyes? Thou

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wouldst fain believe, and mournest that thou canst not; are not these indications or initials of faith? Thou desirest Christ, canst not be satisfied without him; this beating of the pulse evidenceth life. The iron could not move upward if the loadstone did not draw it. Canst thou not say, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee?" This smoking flax the Lord will not quench, it shall be fanned into a flame; thy grace shall flourish in glory.

The following, on the same subject, is from Dr. Robert Smith, preached at Pequea, Pennsylvania, 1758, and inserted in the Evangelical Preacher, vol. ii., p. 94, &c.

I am, says the author, to show you some things that are found in the experience of all true believers, even the *weakest*. They experience a universal change of heart and life; "old things are passed away," &c., 2 Cor. v. 17.: the stony heart heart is removed: Ezek. xxxvi. 16. The Holy Spirit implants a principle of spiritual life in their souls; removes their impenitent hardness, fatal security, stupid blindness, their base propensities, their enmity against God and the gospel method of salvation; discovers divine things in their attractive beauties; gives them a prevailing bias to that which is good. Hence they act from new principles and from new ends; the love of Christ excites their devotions and all their services. Upon this representation perhaps this

OBJECTION may be started: Alas! I fear I have never experienced a change of heart; for self and other corruptions not only work in me, but often prevail against me.

ANSWER: Renewing grace makes an effectual but not a perfect change in all the powers of the soul. There are such evils in the best saints, which, upon some suspension of the divine influences, work in and may prevail for a season; yet the promise of Christ secures them against the dominion of sin, which intends its general and allowed sway: Rom. vi. 14. How weak soever their graces or strong their corruptions may sometimes be, believers have

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an habitual disposedness of heart to God, as their only satisfying portion; and therefore, when their affections are at all misplaced, they can have no peace of mind till they return to and replace their affections on God.

It is clear that true believers, disclaiming their own righteousness, depending entirely on the work of Christ, ought to take comfort; for weak grace does not differ from strong in the nature of its acts, but in the degree of them; and here are the proper evidences of a change of heart, and that Christ is the Saviour of such persons.

OBJECTION: Some bruised reed may be saying, "Alas! I have not a comfortable persuasion of an interest in Christ as my Saviour; therefore I fear I have no true faith.

ANSWER: An interest in Christ is one thing, and a well-grounded persuasion of it is another; the former may be and often is in existence where the latter is not; therefore you should not conclude that you have no interest in Christ from such want of full persuasion. But, that you may be assisted in clearing up your interest, attend to the following queries. Do you not look upon yourself as the chief of sinners, and see so many defects in your religious performances that you wonder God does not reject you for these? Though you are satisfied upon the above point, yet can you acknowledge him as your Lord, and do you not oppose sin as his enemy and yours? Do you highly esteem an interest in Christ? and does your esteem of a state of grace flow, not merely from the safety you suppose it affords, but from its excellency, the beauty of the plan of redemption by which it is obtained? Are you so pleased with this plan that had you ten thousand souls you would desire to venture them all upon it? Do you see it so worthy of the Majesty of heaven that you would not choose any other method of salvation, were it left to your own choice upon what terms you would be saved? If this be the case, you are indeed believers; for to be pleased with the plan of salvation through Christ is to consent to take

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him according to that plan. Are you weary of the unbelief of your hearts, and saying, Lord, what shall I do with this fearful, this suspicious heart? shall I always dispute and stagger? Persuade my soul, good Lord, to rest in thee and on thee! If so, the Lord Jesus will infallibly bind up your bruised reed and smoking flax.

OBJECTION: I feel sin working in me, and often bringing me into captivity to its law.

ANSWER: Believers obey the law of sin with the flesh, but with the mind the law of God: Rom. vii. 25; yet they do not generally and allowedly, nor can they totally and finally, fall away into sin, because "the seed of God remains in them." Turn the needle in the compass to what point you please, it will not fix there, but quiver till it points to the pole again; so, though the saints may be turned off from God by the force of temptation, they cannot be at rest till they point to him again, who is the centre of their affections. An army may be foiled, and yet not totally routed. Though Satan may, for a season, prevail, yet he cannot destroy the saints; nor will your hearts cheerfully yield to his commands, but counting his service a base drudgery, you hate it, and groan to be free from his yoke. I appeal to your consciences whether, upon a calm and deliberate view of the case, you would not choose holiness for its intrinsic beauties, though there was no danger of wrath? If this be the case, you are indeed holy, whatever weight of corruption you groan under; and there will ever be a pressing forward to perfection against all difficulties.

OBJECTION: Still it is objected that sad declensions are felt.

ANSWER: Though it is in the nature of grace to grow, yet not manifestly at all times. Thus, in the vegetable kingdom, trees do not seem to grow in winter, yet they grow at their roots, and obtain fresh strength for the coming spring:* so it is with saints in their low estate; but

* Watson has the same idea, as lately quoted.

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then they revive again: Hos. xiv. 7. You may not experience the sensible exercises you once had, yet the real habit of grace and love to God may be more fixed, your humility may be deeper, and your real sanctification more substantial.

The following respects the burden of sin.

OBJECTION: I am a very great sinner, or I might hope.

ANSWER: Whom else does Christ come to save? Whom does Christ justify but the ungodly?

OBJECTION: But my sins are of no ordinary dye.

ANSWER: And is not Christ's blood of a deeper purple than thy sins? Is there not more virtue in the one than there can be venom in the other? What if the devil doth magnify thy sins, canst not thou magnify thy physician? Cannot God drown thy sins in the ocean of his mercy?

OBJECTION: But my sins are of a long standing.

ANSWER: Dost thou suppose that Christ's blood is only for new and fresh wounds? We read that Christ not only raised the daughter of Jairus, who was but newly dead, but Lazarus, who had lain four days in the grave and began to putrefy; and has Christ less virtue now in heaven than he had on earth? Judas's despair was worse than his treason. I would not encourage any to go on in sin, but let not such despair. God can give an old sinner a new heart: he can make springs in the desert. Have not others been set forth as patterns of mercy, who have come in at the twelfth hour? Therefore break off thy league with sin, throw thyself into Christ's arms; say, Lord Jesus, hast not thou said, those who come to thee thou wilt in no wise cast out?

There are besides three great objections which believers make against themselves, as,

OBJECTION: Alas! I cannot tell whether I have faith or no.

ANSWER: Hast thou no faith? How didst thou come to see it? Thou couldst not see the lack of grace but by the light of grace.



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OBJECTION: But surely if I had faith I should discern it.

ANSWER: Thou mayest have faith and not know it. A man may seek for that which he has in his hand. Mary was with Christ, she spake to him, yet she knew not that it was Christ. Faith often lies hid in the heart, and we see it not for want of search; the fire lies hid in the embers, but blow aside the ashes and it is discernible. Faith may be hid under fears and temptations, but blow the ashes. Thy prizing faith and desire of it is faith itself.

OBJECTION: But my faith is weak; my hand so trembles that I fear it will hardly lay hold on Christ.

ANSWER: There are several things to this point, as,

1. A little faith is faith, as a spark of fire is fire; though the pearl of faith be little, yet, if it be a true pearl, it shines in God's eyes. This little grace is the seed of God, and it shall never die; it is a spark only, but it shall live in the ocean of temptation.

2. A weak faith will entitle us to Christ as well as a stronger—"to them that obtained like precious faith with us." Not but that there are degrees of faith. As all faith purifies, so all faith is not alike, one is more than another; this respects sanctification. But as faith justifies, so faith is all alike precious; the weakest faith justifies as well as that of the most eminent saint.

3. The promise is not made to strong faith, but to true faith. The promise does not say, Whoever hath a faith that can remove mountains, that can stop the mouths of lions, shall be saved; but, Whoever believes, be his faith never so small. What are a grain of mustard seed and a bruised reed but emblems of a weak faith? yet the promise is made to these. Jerome, on the beatitudes, remarks, There are many of the promises made to weak grace; "Blessed are the poor in spirit—that mourn—that hunger and thirst."

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4. A weak faith may be fruitful; the weakest things do multiply most. The vine is a weak tree, it is borne up and underpropt or secured to a wall; but it is so fruitful that in Scripture it is made the emblem of fruitfulness. Hence new converts do great things, have strong affections, excellent dispositions; they have the dew of youth, the bloom of future years.

These specimens show us how our predecessors endeavoured to execute many positive injunctions; as Isa. xl. 1; 1 Thess. v. 14; Isa. xxxv. 3, &c. Weak Christians are ever on the watch, during the delivery of a discourse, for even a sentence suitable to their case: and, however excellent the discourse may be in other respects, these weak ones are "sent empty away" if this be wanting. The manner indeed need not be exactly the same with that of the authors quoted; every age has a language and manner of its own; and every preacher perhaps will have a manner of his own; still the work must be done, and I hope it will not be esteemed a work but a pleasure (something of the same kind as when we relieve the temporal wants of the needy, where there is more pleasure in giving than receiving), much less would I have the preacher be ashamed of this office; our charities may be done in secret, but let us assist weak Christians openly as well as privately, without the fear of being called canting preachers.

I cannot however close this article without observing that, although the doubts and fears of the godly have been and are still common to God's family, and do to a certain degree afford an evidence of their identity, and prove that no "strange things have happened" to the tempted; and although it is often proper to treat the feelings of weak believers in the manner above described; yet there is a shorter way of dealing with those weak ones than the above examples exhibit: that is, to inculcate the propriety and necessity of their looking off from their frames and feelings to the proper object of all intuition, the Lord Jesus



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Christ, Heb. xii. 2. For looking to frames and feelings, or the evidences of grace, for the hope of eternal life, is at best but the lowest kind of comfort that Christians can have —that which is most exposed to the temptations of the great adversary, and which is subject to the most frequent variation; like the usual tokens of the wind or the weather, it is one hour propitious, the next threatening. But casting all those away, looking singly on Christ, strictly "walking by faith in him," is in all cases and under all circumstances safe and effectual; this does honour to the power, grace, and veracity of Christ. The address of Jehoshaphat to his comparatively little army, when about to engage an immense force, is quite to the point. This little army was not to look to the number of the enemy, nor to the fears with which such numbers might invest the hearts of the people, but they were to look on high; "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." We are to look to Christ, who is the author and finisher of all that forms the matter of our confidence; then peace is sure to follow. The only secure and comfort-giving avenue for us, then, is the broad door of the broad promises: "Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "Whosoever will, let him come, and partake of the water of life freely." "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This avenue is always free of access, but the private door of feelings and evidences may seem to us shut, I say may seem for a time to be shut, or not sufficiently open to admit us by it, and here we find all Christian disquietudes and perplexities.

Again, if our faith (in the name of every other grace) be weak, ever so weak, were it not more consistent with our duty to ourselves, instead of ruminating over this defect, rather to apply ourselves to the aids of the gospel, to prayer for instance, and say, "Lord increase our faith"

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(Luke xvii. 5); "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief" (Mark ix. 24)? and is it not right to persevere in this course continually, that our faith may be increased by exercise? for, as the strength of the arm is increased by use, without doubt every mental and moral faculty is to be invigorated in the same manner. Man is so constituted; and experience teaches us that it must be so. And, on the contrary, it is by *habit* that the Christian's doubts and fears are continually augmented and become more and more insupportable. I question much if any man since the days of the apostles had clearer views of this matter than the late Mr. Romaine, the highly-esteemed author of the Life of Faith, &c.; a good deal of excellent advice on this point is concentrated in one of his letters to a friend; it is No. 104 of the seventh volume of edition 1809; and I feel strongly inclined to give an extract of this letter, to confirm the observations I have made subsequent to the examples, as to the best course and the shortest to bring weak believers into a state of rest, and which in many cases, at the least, is preferable to a course of argumentation with them on some minor points of their complaint. A physician may very properly sometimes attempt to abate the symptoms of a complaint, but the cure must be effected by striking at the root of the disease; for when this plan succeeds, the symptoms will abate of themselves.

"My dear Friend,

"I received your letter, which contained the state of your case [doubts and fears.] Scarcely a day happens but I meet with some or other in your condition, with exactly the same complaints, arising from the same cause; but in fact there is nothing in yours or similar cases but what makes strongly for, and nothing against, the true hope of the gospel. A Christian must have such anxieties, but in the end, by the teaching of the Spirit, they will have a happy issue.

"I observe what you say of your judgment. You are

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enlightened to see that Jesus is all in salvation-work. You unsay these words in the same breath you say them; for, because you are not always satisfied of your interest in this salvation, or always alike comforted with it, you therefore doubt and reason about it being yours. 'My judgment is clearly convinced, and (you say) my heart desires to be cast wholly upon the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation; but in the act of doing this I always fail.' What reasoning is here! how directly contrary to the spirit of the gospel! for you are looking, not at the object of faith, at Jesus, but at your faith. And, because your faith is not quite perfect, you are as much discouraged as if Jesus was not a perfect Saviour. My dear friend, how sadly does the sly spirit of bondage deceive you! for what is your act of believing? Is it to save you? Are you to be saved *for* believing? If so, then you put acts and works in the place of the Saviour. And faith, as an act, is in your view part of your salvation. The free grace of the gospel you turn into a work, and how well that work is done becomes the ground of your hope. What a dreadful mistake is this, since salvation is 'not to him that worketh, but to him that believeth!' When you so believe on the object of faith, peace will follow (Rom. v. 1), not by looking at your faith, but by still viewing the object. But if you persist in looking on your faith, several wrongs will result. You will not find peace in this way, for it flies from you; you will do dishonour to the Saviour by making a saviour of your faith. It is clear, if you could be satisfied with your faith, there would be an interruption of faith itself in its exercise; and hence a prevention or bar is put to that peace which would otherwise necessarily follow: you lose in this way what you seek, and lose it in your way of seeking; you want comfort, and you look to your faith for it. If faith could speak, it would say: I have none to give you, look upon Jesus; it is all in him. Indeed, my friend, it is. The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, will not glorify your faith. He

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will not give it the honour of comforting you. He takes nothing to comfort you with but the work of Christ: John xvi. 13, 14. This lesson I think he is teaching you, although you pervert it. He is bringing you off from looking legally at your faith. He intends you should not regard, as you have done, *how* you believe, but to settle you in believing. This, then, is the manner of your salvation. The divine Father gives Christ to you; the Holy Spirit brings you to Christ and enables you to trust in him. This is all that faith has to do in the matter: at best it is but an open empty hand stretched forth at God's bidding, but Christ so laid hold of is your salvation. It is not faith but Christ: it is not my hand, but the thing received into my hand, that saves me. I grant you, and I know it well, that much faith brings much comfort from Christ, and carries much glory to him; but the way to get much faith is not to look at it as you do, but at the Saviour himself; not to look at your hand, but at Jesus; not how you hold him, but that he is yours, and holds you andy our faith too, and therefore you 'shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life.'

"After I had observed these errors in your looking at your act of faith, I did not wonder at the following parts of your letter. Such as your not being pleased with your faith, and therefore not pleased with your state, nor your graces, nor your attainments, nor your own righteousness, but you thought every thing made against you. Have you nothing to look at but Jesus? That is right. Then look unto him and be saved, Isa. xlv. 22. Can you see nothing to rest in of your own? Are you forced to renounce the goodness of your faith as an act? And do you experience that you cannot be saved for it? Very well; hold fast there. Abide by this, no grace as acted by you can save: follow this blessed teaching, and cleave with full purpose of heart unto the Lord Jesus. You must learn to make

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him all your salvation. Know divine teaching by this mark—that whatever tends to humble you is from the glorifier of Jesus. I am, &c.* "

It must here be observed that the case of some Christians will require a very different mode of treatment from the above, in order to check the growth of presumption and false security. Some there are who, though real Christians, have more confidence than consists with holy fear. They are constitutionally fearless rather than graciously fearless; these will "rejoice with them that rejoice," but are unprepared to "weep with them that weep." They are less vigilant and conscientious in their general walk, and less fruitful in the minor acts of a gracious life, than those who are accounted weaker Christians: they possess not so much humble love, or sympathizing care; but they will do greater and bolder acts for Christ than any other class of Christians. They require more of the curb, or they will very likely fall into great errors of faith or practice. Such persons will perhaps enter with zeal and alacrity into any scheme for extending the knowledge of Christ, however arduous; and they will probably, for a time, prosecute it with vigour, but having never seriously counted the cost, nor been conscious of their own weakness, they are speedily dismayed; while the more diffident Christian frequently manifests more stability and perseverance, because he has weighed the difficulties and is prepared to meet them.

* See Baxter's Saint's Rest, ch. viii. § 9 and 15. By this quotation from Baxter it seems that Romaine had borrowed his idea from Father Baxter.

See also Rawlin on Justification, p. 52. Notes from Whitby, and Dr. Goodwin, for much information on this most important point of divinity.

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# LECTURE XXVII.

## TOPIC XXIII.

### CONSIDER CHARACTERS OF MAJESTY, MEANNESS, INFIRMITY, NECESSITY, UTILITY, EVIDENCE, &c.

TAKE an example from John xiv. 1: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." These words are characterized by a *majesty* which exalts Jesus Christ above all ordinary pastors, and above all the prophets: for who besides the Son of God could say, "Believe also in me?" These words equal Jesus Christ to the eternal Father, and make him the object of our faith and confidence as well as the Father, for they imply that faithful souls may repose an entire confidence in his power, protection, and government, and that the shadow of his wings will dissipate the sorrows of their minds, and leave no room for fear.

You see also a character of *tenderness* and infinite love towards his disciples, which appears in the assurance with which he inspires them, and in the promise which he tacitly makes them, of always powerfully supporting and never forsaking them. The same characters, or others like them, may be observed in all this discourse of our Saviour, which goes on to the end of the sixteenth chapter: As in these words: "I am the way, the truth, and the life;" in these:



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"He that hath seen me, Philip, hath seen the Father;"—in these: "Whatsoever ye ask in my name, I will do it;" and again in these: "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." In general, we see almost in every verse, majesty, tenderness, love of holiness, confidence of victory, and other such characters, which it is important to remark.

MEANNESS AND INFIRMITY.—You will very often observe characters of *meanness* and *infirmity* in the words and actions of the disciples of Jesus Christ: as when they asked him, "Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Acts i. 6. You see, even after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they were full of that *low* and carnal idea which they had entertained of a temporal Messiah.

You also see a *rash curiosity* in their desiring to know the times and seasons of those great events which God thought fit to conceal.

Observe, again, Peter's vision. A great sheet was let down from heaven, and filled with all sorts of animals; a voice said to him, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat;" to which he answered, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common and unclean." You see in this answer an *over-scrupulous* conscience, all embarrassed with legal ceremonies; and a very defective and imperfect knowledge of gospel liberty.

There is almost an infinite number of texts in the New Testament where such infirmities appear; and you must not fail to remark them in order to prove, 1. That grace is compatible with much human weakness; 2. That heavenly light arises by degrees upon the mind, and that it is with the new man as with the natural man, who is born an infant, lisps in his childhood, and arrives at perfection insensibly and by little and little; 3. That the strongest and furthest advanced Christians ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, since God himself does not

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"break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax." This he was pleased to exemplify in the most ample manner, in the person of Jesus Christ, when he was upon earth.

NECESSITY.—In regard to *necessity*, you may very often remark this in explaining the doctrines of religion; as when you speak of the mission of Jesus Christ into the world—of his familiar conversation with men—of his death—resurrection—and ascension to heaven, &c.; for you may not only consider the *truth* but also the *necessity* of each; and by this means open a most beautiful field of theological argument and elucidation.

The same may be affirmed of sending the Comforter, that is, the Holy Ghost, into the world; in explaining these words, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter;" John xiv. 16. You may very properly consider the necessity of this *Comforter;* either because without his light and help we can never release ourselves from the bondage of sin and Satan; or because without his assistance all that Jesus Christ has done in the economy of salvation would be entirely useless to us. You may also observe the necessity of his *eternal abode* with us;—because it is not enough to be once converted by his efficacious power; we need his continual presence and efficacy to carry on and finish the work of sanctification, otherwise we should quickly relapse into our first condition.

UTILITY.—Where a thing does not appear absolutely necessary, you may remark its *utility;* as, in some particular miracles of Jesus Christ—in some peculiar afflictions of the faithful—in the manner in which St. Paul was converted—and in an infinite number of subjects which present themselves to a preacher to be discussed.

EVIDENCE.—Evidence must be particularly pressed in articles which are disputed, or which are likely to be controverted. For example: Were you to treat of the second

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commandment, in opposition to the custom and practice of worshipping images in the church of Rome, you should press the *evidence* of the words. As, 1. It has pleased God to place this command, not in some obscure part of revelation, but in the *moral law;* in that law, every word of which he caused to proceed from the midst of the flames. 2. He uses not only the term *image*, but *likeness*, and specifies even the likenesses of *all* the things in the world, of those which are *in heaven above*, of those which are *in the earth beneath*, and of those which are *under the earth*. 3. In order to prevent all the frivolous objections of the human mind, he goes yet further, not only forbidding the *worshipping* of them, but also the making *use* of them in any manner of way; and, which is more, he even forbids the *making* of them: "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them. Thou shalt not serve them. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," &c. 4. Add to all this, that the Lord subjoined the highest *interests* to enforce it. He interested herein his majesty, his covenant, and his infinite power; "For," says he, "I am Jehovah, thy God." He goes further, and interests his jealousy, that is, that inexorable justice which avenges affronts offered to his love. Yea, in order to touch us still more sensibly, he even goes so far as to interest our children, threatening us with that terrible wrath which does not end with the parents, but passes down to their posterity. What could the Lord say more plainly and evidently, to show that he would suffer no image in his religious worship? After all this, is it not the most criminal presumption to undertake to distinguish, in order to elude, the force of this commandment?

You may, if you choose, over and above all this, add Moses's explication of this command in the fourth of Deuteronomy.

You may also use the same character of *evidence* when you explain several passages which adversaries abuse; as

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these words, "This is my body which is broken for you;" and these in the sixth of John: "Eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood;" and those passages also in St. James which speak of justification by works; for in treating these passages in opposition to the false senses which the church of Rome gives of them, you must assemble many circumstances, and place each in its proper light, so that all together they may diffuse a great brightness upon the text, and clearly show its true sense. See p. 190.

To the separate illustration of the several points comprehended in this Topic, it does not appear necessary to add any thing to the remarks contained in them; and on this account it was my intention not to have resumed the subject in this place. On further reflection, however, it appeared to me that some general observations which suggested themselves were quite within the spirit of the Topic, and might not be unacceptable. The design of the Topic is to lead us to discriminate, and to improve by way of *comment*, or otherwise, the particular *qualities* of majesty, &c., discoverable in any statement.

This is the philosophy of the textuarian, and must precede every operation of a divisional nature. The fact or truth of a text is generally easily discovered by the interrogations, or by reducing the text to its more natural order, which answers the purpose of Claude's and Simeon's categorical reductions, and which stands sufficiently exemplified in our regular division. But the *qualities* of a passage of Scripture form a separate study.

What I have here presumed to call *qualities* other authors call by different names. Dr. Watts calls them *modes* and *accidents*. Mr. Simeon, more to our purpose, marks the *character* and *spirit* of a passage; I also still think it will be allowed that the character and spirit of any speech or writing is to be learned or spelled out from the qualities

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discoverable in such speech or writing; qualities first strike the mind and determine the name or character. The qualities of a sentence, either expressed or conceived, lead us to the thought itself, the point, or if you please the spirit, of the text; but it is the qualities that lead us to that denomination. If we speak of *character* it comes to the same point, the qualities either expressed or understood constitute the character: thus, if we would show what the character of wisdom is (Isa. xxxiii. 6), we must go into a specification of its qualities. St. James describes these, iii. 17: Qualities may direct to an end, as having certain tendencies towards it; as luxury, the qualities of which tend to destroy the constitution, and waste a man's fortune. The qualities of self-denial, or of temperance, chastity, &c., naturally tend to the perfection of the Christian character, and each may be considered in this view on a suitable text. So that all qualities are discriminative of the subject to which they belong, or they lead to the subject itself.

Another use which we may make of our Topic is to find out, from the qualities of the subject, an appropriate title or heading of a discourse. This may appear to be a very trifling subject, not here worth consideration. I allow that by the heading lines of some sermons any one might be led to suppose that their authors thought so. But the title to a sermon is of great consequence, not indeed to set it off to the best advantage, nor merely as a matter of accuracy, but in its practical results. If the title be judiciously fixed upon, either written or understood, or conceived in the preacher's mind, he feels himself thereby confined to consistency, he feels that he must keep to his title, which is even a closer point than his text, while the announcement of the title tends also to keep the hearer's or reader's mind steady to the point in hand.

The three kinds of titles seem to me to be these:—

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First: The subject or character of the text. Acts xx. 26, 27: "I take you to record this day," &c. Here the subject is *Ministerial Fidelity*. The author shows, Wherein it consists; The difficulty of maintaining it; Its immense importance. Here we see how closely every division connects with the title.

Titus i. 16: "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him." The character which forms the subject and suggests the title is *The False Professor*. A common character; An awful character; A pitiable character.

Secondly: The end or object of a text, consequently of the discourse. 1 Tim. i. 5: "Now the end of the commandment is charity." The title is *The true End of the Gospel*. Then inquire, What is the true scope of the gospel as contrasted with the use too often made of it? When that end may be said to be truly and properly attained? Here the title might have been *On Charity;* but in this case a different mode of discussion would have been required. Again, Rom. vi. 1—4: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Here the title is *The Gospel secures Holiness*. The supposed tendency of the gospel is not true: The security it gives for the practice of holiness is most manifest, for the reasons laid down in the subsequent part of the text. Again, Gal. i. 4: "Who gave himself," &c. Here the title is, *The great object of Christ's coming*.

Thus we see that the subject, or the end and design of things, may become the proper material of titles, with all their variations or forms of expression; but that which I am anxious to enforce is, that we may be greatly assisted in devising titles by considering *qualities*, the only proper point of my Lecture. The title *must* be upon qualities, if these form the strongest points of a discourse; for here the preacher's business is to treat of these qualities—their

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variety, extent, mode of acting, benefits or detriments, with all the sensations they excite of admiration or disgust, &c. Besides, I cannot but think that there is something very judicious, perhaps even elegant, in such titles. Take, for example, 1 Tim. iv. 8, 9: "Godliness is profitable unto all things." The title is, *The Profitableness of true Godliness.* Here profitableness is singled out from the numerous and excellent qualities of godliness—in relation to this life, and that which is to come. Now had the title assigned to the discourse been, *True Godliness described,* it would have been correct, but not judicious; for the main point is its profitable quality; nay, I would sacrifice elegance to precision in any such case. It is the profitable quality of godliness that I had in my eye in preparing the discourse, and it is to this I desire the chief attention of the hearer; for this especially is favourable to the very strongest principles of our common nature, self-interest and self-preservation.

Or take Heb. iv. 12: "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." I have quoted this text at full length to show the *many* qualities of the divine word. Now here there is no unnecessary redundancy of expression. Every quality is but a just amplification of the subject; it is *quick, powerful, sharp, very sharp, piercing,* separates and divides all the parts of the spiritual anatomy of the soul; discerns, throws open, all the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The last example had but one quality named in it, but this has so many that there seems to be some difficulty in forming a title sufficiently comprehensive. Perhaps we cannot do better in such a case than to take the leading quality as a title: *The Energy or Power of God's Word.*

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2 Cor. xi. 29: "Who is weak, and I am not weak," &c. The title to this may be *Christian Sympathy*, because this is the noticeable quality before us in the text.

In this Topic, besides the direct uses which I have endeavoured to point out, we also find the chief elements of criticism, or the principal points upon which the judgment is to be exercised in order to determine the degree of excellency, or otherwise, attaching to any literary production: hence it has been said, "He is of a learned spirit that dives into all qualities, and ascertains all movements of the mind."

Unless we are wrapped in indolence or apathy, we cannot well read a book or hear a speech without forming some opinion as to what are its qualities.* As there are certain personal qualities peculiar to certain individuals, and to describe these is to *characterize* the man, so there are certain peculiarities which belong to expression or discourse. There are as many of these as there are intelligent emotions which express themselves in language. Every thought has its quality, and diligence must find it out.† Besides such as the title of our Topic points out, they are rational or absurd, affectionate or malignant, amiable or disgusting, beautiful or deformed, clear or confused, argumentative or loose or in want of connexion; they are full or defective, true or false, important or trivial, diffuse or laconic, cold or fervid, sublime or mean; they are suitable or misplaced, profound or frivolous, benignant or severe; they are haughty or condescending, chaste or licentious, good or evil; every thing that the Scripture approves or condemns, every passion, habit, or sense, has its respective award, according to its use or tendency; every thing in divinity and morals, every thing pertaining to the religious and social life, every thing that comes into the province of

* See Bickersteth's Characters of great Authors, chap. 11.
† We naturally form our contrasts chiefly from qualities.

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truth, into the offices and relations of man, has its qualities which form its characteristic. These are the elements upon which our learned critics give the sentence of death or life to our multitudinous publications. In some cases it may be the happiness of poor authors to be beneath their regard. In other and more happy instances they give the authors the benefit of their *imprimatur*, and thus give currency to works of real merit. I do not say that critics are solely engaged in the consideration of qualities. They have to consider the things themselves to which qualities are only relative. They detect imposture, and bring to light many realities which are worthy of their laborious research. They establish as far as they can the standard of excellency and truth in reference to the work before them, and show the *quantum* of merit that belongs to the author. They consider the claim that an author has to public favour: what of novelty he produces; whether the subject be in want of discussion or is exhausted and threadbare; whether he brings some old but valuable subject into a new or improved light; how far the work is adapted to the persons had in view; if a work be worth entertaining they will perhaps point out what would improve it, and especially if the author is but recently before the public. But the power which our brother critics possess over the public mind is chiefly ascribable to a just discovery of the qualities exhibited in an author. It is therefore of considerable importance that this Topic should be borne in mind in the perusal of any human performance, religious or literary; for the rules which direct our public critics must also direct us in the perusal of any work, that we may be able to form a correct judgment respecting it.

In reading theological works we should carefully mark whether they amplify the text of Scripture, or discover the connexion of its several parts, or explain the meaning of the Spirit of God where difficulties appear, or throw out

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some hidden beauties, &c. A work which renders us these and such like services is worthy of high regard. But some of our great readers will travel through many bulky volumes, and if you ask them what are the excellencies, faults, or defects which they found, you will obtain only some vague and general answer, which demonstrates that they are book readers, and that is nearly all; but the man who reads for profit "marks, learns, and inwardly digests" what he finds. He examines the particular view of his author, his arrangement, and his arguments and illustrations, and particularly what are the qualities predominant in his author. His keen and steady eye suffers nothing to escape him; he had rather read a little, upon this plan, than reckon the value of his studies by the quantity of pages he has perused. Like the bee, he rests long enough upon each flower to extract its virtues. He marks particular parts with his pencil; or makes some extracts to throw into his common-place book; or notes in the margin of his Bible what book to refer to on particular passages, the volume and the page. In the course of time the broad margin of his Bible* becomes a little treasury. This has been my practice for some years, and, on many occasions, I have found it a very seasonable assistance; though perhaps I have not been sufficiently industrious; for I see many leaves vacant which might have been supplied. Now in general the closer the student keeps to the qualities of his author the more he will be improved. He will be furnished perhaps with an opening to his own faults in preaching, and those points of excellence which he should endeavour to imitate; his taste will improve; his imagination become more vigorous; his judgment more correct. This true knowledge of books will resemble that of a mer-

* The Bible for this purpose should be wide in the margin, or furnished with interleaves.

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chant on 'change, who pretty nearly knows the value of every one on his walk—so the student obtains such accurate knowledge of books, that if his library be small, yet it contains no literary rubbish; or, if he has any such commodities, they will be known by the dust that covers them, or by the remote place they occupy.

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# LECTURE XXVIII.

## TOPIC XXIV.

### REMARK DEGREES

For example, Gal. i. 8: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." After you have remarked the extreme force and significancy of the words, observe that the apostle denounces an anathema *twice*, even denouncing it against *himself*, should he ever be guilty of what he condemns; denouncing it even against an *angel* from heaven, in the same case. You must observe, the apostle does not always use the same vehemence when he speaks against error. In the fourteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans he contents himself with calling those "weak in the faith," who eat only herbs, and exhorts other believers to bear with them. In the third chapter of the First of Corinthians he protests to those who "build with wood, hay, and stubble, upon Christ the foundation, that their work should be burnt, but that they should be saved, though it should be by fire." In the seventeenth chapter of Acts, we are told "that Paul's spirit was stirred," when he saw the idolatry and superstition of the Athenians. Elsewhere he says, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy." In all these there is a force; but nothing like what appears

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in these reiterated words: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." "As we said before, so say I now again, if any preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Why so? Because the apostle speaks here of an *essential* corruption of the gospel, which the false apostles aimed at in the churches of Galatia; they were annihilating the grace of Christ, by associating with it the Mosaic economy. They aimed at the entire ruin of the church, by debasing the purity of its doctrines. In this case, the conscience of this good man could contain no longer; he stretched his zeal and vehemence as far as possible; he became inexorable, and pronounced anathemas. Nothing prevented him; neither the authority of the greatest men, nor yet the dignity of the glorious angels: "If even an angel from heaven preach," &c.

Such were Claude's ideas, and I admire Paul's zeal, and I approve very highly of Claude's observations upon it. Neither St. Paul nor Claude give any offence, because the matter is now passed by; but if a subverter of gospel truths or manners were in the present day to be boldly attacked, I have no doubt but the champion for truth would be assailed as unchristian, censorious, illiberal, and narrow-minded; and this by the very men who express their approbation of Paul's conduct. The Pharisees pretended to venerate the prophets, and honoured their sepulchres; but when a Prophet of infinite purity and divine authority reproved their unbelief and hypocrisy, they assailed him with abusive epithets, and at length took away his life. In short, the living reprover is sure to be an offender; while one who reproves by his writings will have his name honoured.

To this I shall add, "Degree is the comparative condition of any thing, and the study of this Topic is necessary to

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the obtaining of *accuracy* in theology. An accurate sermon is a discourse made up of an exact *quantity* of each component part. There is a certain degree or quantum of truth; there is an exact point of light, or degree of *evidence*, in which this truth is placed; there is a nice *quantum sufficit* of *imagery*, colouring and enlivening the evidence; there is a nice degree of *temper* adjusted to all parts; the reasoning is vigorous, the narration cool, the suasion pathetic, soft, and warm, and so on; there is a sort of *style* adapted to the subject, and there is a degree of vehemence or indifference in the very *words* or *letters* that express the whole, suited to the importance or the comparative insignificance of each part. The composition of such a sermon is a work of great labour, and yet it must not appear to be laboured at all. And, although this may be carried to such excess that the composition of sermons by these great labours would nearly exclude other parts of the ministerial office, yet some attention to *degrees* is essential in studying Scripture; in investigating and reasoning upon subjects; in determining the direction of promises and threatenings; in relieving troubled consciences, and so on. There are degrees of punishment pointed against degrees of sins; degrees of glory adapted to degrees of virtue; degrees of assurance proportioned to degrees of faith, &c."—*Robinson's Claude*, vol. ii., p. 249.

Marking degrees is certainly very essential to an expositor, who should have a philosophical as well as a Christian mind. On many occasions it is not enough to mark the qualities of a subject, but these must also be distinguished according to their different degrees; for every quality has its degree as well as its kind. There is a good, better, best; a bad, worse, worst, &c. There are degrees of majesty, meanness, infirmity, necessity, utility, &c. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars;" for these luminaries differ in the degree of their light and excellence.

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If the eye be passed over the last Lecture, it will appear how great the variety of qualities is, and by this Topic the *degree* of such qualities will necessarily fall under consideration, whereby discrimination is rendered more complete, and we are preserved from a loose manner of address, and enabled to give every thing its due weight and measure.

The original design of the Topics was to found observations upon them: an observation upon this branch can certainly be introduced into any kind of discourse in which an opening appears to receive it: and now I add an instance of the same kind. It is on Rom. i. 8: "I thank my God, through Jesus Christ, for you all." The apostle had received a very favourable account of the spiritual state of the church at Rome, of the whole church generally, and which indeed stood confirmed by universal testimony. "We therefore," says he, "give thanks to God for you all."

1. For those among you who have begun to manifest a concern for your souls.

Truly this is a just ground of thanksgiving to God. A most felicitous escape you have had from the society you have left, the sins you have begun to renounce, &c. God only must have the glory. He quickened you when dead, endowed you with new dispositions, gave you a new work, placed you under new influences, and gave you new objects.

II. But with *greater* delight will we return thanks for those who have made some progress in the divine life.

Over such of you we rejoice with very exalted joy; for many, who run well for a season, leave off to behave themselves wisely, and after having known the way of righteousness, forsake it. It is therefore our joy that ye stand fast in the Lord, and on your account we joy in God through Jesus Christ for stability and growth in grace.

III. Most of all must we bless God for those among

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you who are walking worthy of their high and heavenly calling.

To such our text more especially refers; because the apostle specifies, as the ground of his thanksgiving, "that their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world." Now for such we thank God.

1. Because of the glory which they bring to God. They live for God; they commend his religion. Such are in fact the lights of the world, and those who behold them are constrained to "glorify their Father who is in heaven."

2. Because of the good which they do to mankind. These lead the way, encourage, teach, and instruct others; commence plans of usefulness and carry them on. Works of *humanity* might be originated by others; but works of *religion* would fail if such Christians did not exert themselves.

3. Because of the blessings that await them in a better world. We thank God for your prospects.—*Horæ Homiliticæ,* Append., vol. v., p. 1, &c.

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## TOPIC XXV.

### OBSERVE DIFFERENT INTERESTS.

Thus, if you were explaining the miracle which Jesus Christ wrought in the synagogue on a sabbath-day, when he healed the withered hand in the presence of the Herodians and Pharisees, you might remark the different *interests* of the spectators in that act of our Lord; for, on the one hand, Moses and his religion seemed interested therein two ways. 1. The miracle was wrought on a *day* in which Moses had commanded them to do no manner of work. And 2. This was done in a *synagogue* consecrated to the Mosaic worship: so that it was, as it were, insulting



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Moses in his own house. Further, the Herodians, who were particularly attached to the person of Herod, either for political reasons or for some others unknown, were obliged to be offended; for this miracle had a tendency to prove Christ's Messiahship, and thereby (as was commonly thought) his right to the kingdom of Israel; and consequently this must tend to blacken the memory of a former Herod, who endeavoured to kill him in his infancy. The Pharisees were no less interested; for they considered him as their reprover and enemy, and could not help being very much troubled whenever they saw Jesus Christ work a miracle. Then observe the interest of our Lord Jesus Christ: his concern was to do good wherever he had an opportunity, and to glorify God his Father by confirming the word of his gospel by acts of infinite power. The poor afflicted man had a double interest in it: the healing of his body and the improvement of his mind. Thus this action of Jesus Christ, having divers relations, becomes, as it were, a point whence many lines may be drawn, some on this side, others on that; and hence arise the different remarks which may be made upon it.

The following I hope will not be an inappropriate addition.

This article, like the last, is of small comparative importance, yet the accurate expositor will not despise its aid. However, I have not been able to discover a single example of any value upon thisTopic, and shall only add what Mr. Robinson supplied, and attached to his original translation of Claude; and this will not be quite without its use to many students, for this work I believe is out of print, and is in but few hands.

Mr. Robinson says: "This beautiful Topic of illustration may serve for a clue to many passages of Scripture; to almost all history, profane and sacred; and to numberless affairs which are daily transacted before our eyes. It

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proves that different men have different interests, and divers interests operate different sentiments." Again: Interests and sentiments have different origins: some are gracious, some natural; some spring from education, habit, passion, or prejudice; and many so blindly fall into different interests, that if you were to ask them why they have attached themselves, in the manner they have done, to this side or that, they would think it a very strange question.

I said that I had discovered no example of sermonizing upon this Topic. However, the two following from Massillon, which are pointed out by Mr. Robinson, will be acceptable. Massillon was a celebrated French bishop, highly prized in the court of Louis XIV., and one of the preachers of that day who fixed the modern standard of preaching.

Luke ii. 14: "Glory to God in the highest," &c.

I. God's glory was concerned.

1. Idolatry had transferred that worship to itself which was due only to God.

2. Formality prevailed among the Jews, and they rendered an obnoxious worship to the God of their forefathers.

3. Philosophy had conveyed away the glory of his providence and eternal wisdom. These were three daring insults which mankind offered to God, and which Christ came to remove.

II. The peace of mankind was interested in Christ's birth; for they had robbed one another of peace by pride, by voluptuousness, by revenge: Christ's grace heals the first, his doctrine the second, his example the last.

Matt. ii. 2: "We have seen his star, and are come to worship him."

The star, like the gospel, directing to Christ, meets with worshippers in the wise men; in the priests, dissemblers; in Herod, a persecutor. So it is with the gospel now; a few



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receive it, many disguise it, more still despise and persecute it. This leads us to treat,

I. Of the truth admitted.

II. The truth disguised.

III. The truth persecuted, either by the practice of libertines, whose conduct runs it down; or by people of pleasure, who exaggerate their own happiness and the difficulties of Christianity; or by fools, who mock and deride it.

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# LECTURE XXIX.

## TOPIC XXVI.

### DISTINGUISH, DEFINE, DIVIDE.

1. *Distinguish.* To speak properly, we distinguish, when we consider a thing in different views. As for example: faith is considered either objectively or subjectively. In the view of its *object*, faith is the work of Jesus Christ; his word and his cross produces it; for take away the death of Christ Jesus, and there is no more faith. His resurrection also is the cause of it. "If Jesus Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." But if you consider faith as to its *subject*, it is the work of the Holy Ghost. So again (to use the same example), faith may be considered with a view to *justification*, or with a view to *sanctification*. In the first view it is opposed to works; in the second, it is the principle and cause of good works. Thus man may be considered with reference to *civil society*, by which he is obliged to particular duties, and partakes of corresponding advantages; or he may be considered with respect to *church fellowship*, and so he is subject to Christian laws, and enjoys Christian privileges. This custom of distinguishing different views is very common in preaching; but they should be stated in a more intelligible way than by *object* and *subject*. These are, to most people, mystical expressions.

I can refer you to a very excellent distinction, and expressed very clearly in Lavington, on communion with our

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own hearts. "It is," says he, "1. *Direct.*—When the understanding and will debate on the subject of good and evil in prospect. Here we debate with our own heart, whether the thing be really lawful or not. 2. By way of *reflection.* Here we can commune with our heart as to the past, whether such a thing that has been done, is such as conscience does and ought to approve." The author again distinguishes between *ordinary* and *extraordinary* occasions that call for such strict scrutiny, All this representation is practical and plain. Farquhar, also, has a similar example, p. 262. Robinson has also introduced, from the French, a very striking instance, on Heb. ii. 14, 15. Some persons are, "through fear of death, all their life-time subject to bondage." These persons must be *distinguished*—1. Some fear death from a pure instinct of nature. 2. Some from a religious fear, having a suspicion of their state. 3. Some from a spirit of infidelity, mere want of faith. 4. Some from an attachment to this world. And 5. Others from a mere weakness of the imagination. —*Bertheau,* tom. ii.

Our pleaders at the bar make great use of this Topic. "Gentlemen of the jury, what my learned brother has told you may be perfectly correct, from the cases which he has cited; but these cases turned upon a different point, and have no manner of relation to the point you are called upon to decide. The circumstances, also, of the one and the other are quite different, and require a very different decision." So with regard to disputed doctrine. If we take a doctrine only in the view given by those who differ from us, there may be some truth in it, but then the representation is not a fair one, for it proceeds upon suppositions which we cannot allow; it is intrenched in a set of proofs which are not applicable to it, and involves a state of things quite the contrary of what our experience teaches us and Scripture affirms.*

* See Robert Hall's Works, vol. vi., p. 343.

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2. *Define.* This is sometimes used when an act of God is spoken of, as the pardon of our sins, the justification of our persons, &c.; or when a virtue and a vice is in question, for then it may not be improper to define. So far Claude. I may be permitted to add Dr. Watts's rule for a just definition. 1. It must be *universal* or *adequate.* 2. *Proper* and *peculiar* to the thing defined, and agree to that alone. 3. *Clear* and *plain.* 4. *Short,* and have no superfluous words. 5. Neither the *thing defined,* nor a mere *synonymous* name, should make any part of the definition.

We must allow that Claude and Dr. Watts may be suitable for the schools, but we must have something plainer than either. Walker thus defines godly sorrow: "Godly sorrow is just and impartial; it always begins at home, and makes few visits abroad," &c. The whole passage is beautiful, but too long to be quoted here. Nor must I omit the apostle James's definition of heavenly wisdom: "It is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." As to learned definitions, they must never be made beyond the walls of a college or an academy. Robinson has very justly satirized them in his Notes on Claude.

3. *Divide.* This either regards different species of the same genus, or different parts of the whole, and it may sometimes be used profitably. Thus, in speaking of God's providence in general, you may consider the extent of that providence, to which are subject, 1. Natural causes. 2. Contingent. 3. Independent. 4. Good and bad. 5. Great and small.

After all our endeavours to make division a plain thing, I hope we need not spend time upon a further explanation; I shall therefore proceed to enlarge upon this important Topic, and to observe that here we are not to distinguish texts, &c., but things, properties, or qualities. Nor will it be necessary to pass every subject or quality through this severe scrutiny; but occasions will sometimes

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occur, and then we must acquit ourselves as thinking beings, and the examination is to prove it, whether it be that which is required for instruction, or for the correction of a mistake in theology; and one of the best means of acquiring that discriminating talent which is necessary to enable you to distinguish with accuracy is to study the works of very acute writers, who, without departing from simplicity of style, have stated in a few intelligible sentences what others draw out into a long exhibition of unintelligibles.*

We are to *distinguish*. It may here be observed, that where we perceive a subject to possess several qualities, and that these differ greatly one from another, it will frequently be proper to distinguish between them before we can proceed to a judicious treatment of the subject.† Where one subject possesses properties which bear some general resemblance to those of other subjects, this Topic is also required. In subjects of controversy, for example, you may take occasion to show that your opponent has confounded two things together, which, though they possess some properties in common, yet agree only in some points, and are so materially different in other points as to render his argument inapplicable to the subject in hand. Again: in your ordinary ministrations you must frequently distinguish a mere profession of religion from true piety: too often these are confounded together; and it is the preacher's duty, not only to show that the form is valueless without the spirit of godliness, but to point out with accuracy and force what it is that constitutes the distinction. The weak believer must also be distinguished from the mere professor, the designing hypocrite from the self-deceiving pharisee, &c.

* It has been remarked of Henry that, in his commentary, he often makes some very learned remarks and just distinctions in a very familiar manner, without appearing learned.

† See Locke's Conduct of the Understanding, Lect. xxxi.

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The confounding of one subject with another has in fact given rise to most of the errors which are to be found in the Christian church; as may be seen in the church of Rome especially, where penance is confounded with repentance, and the absolution of the priest with the pardon of heaven, &c.

The following are examples of observation on the Topic.

To clear divine impartiality from objections arising from different capacities and conditions, we must form a right notion of what is called "*respect of persons;*" to do this we must distinguish between matters of favour and matters of justice.

The manner of God's conduct with his creatures in giving them more or less, in placing them here or there when he calls them into being, is matter of favour. No account should be asked or expected. What is called respect of persons has nothing to do with it. But in his behaviour to creatures consequent on their behaviour to him, he acts by the rules of justice and equity. In this case justice and equity will be so manifest as to clear him from the imputation of partiality.

If we examine the passages of Scripture where God is said to be "no respecter of persons," you will find this character ascribed to him, not as he is creator, but as he is ruler and judge, as he is dispenser of rewards and punishments. So men, when they are commanded not to respect persons, are to be considered not as doing favour, but exercising authority, judgment, and justice in a public or private capacity, &c.—*Jortin on Rom.* ii. 11.

The gospel of Christ is thought by many to be a source of evil, and certain it is that evils have not unfrequently followed in its train. But we must distinguish between two things which are very often confounded; namely, the *cause* of the evil, and the *occasion* of evil. There is not any blessing which Divine Providence has bestowed upon us which may not be an occasion of evil, if it be not used



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in the manner and for the ends for which it was intended. Our corporeal and mental faculties may all be abused for the production of evil; and all the fruits of the earth may be made subservient to the gratification of inordinate desire. This has happened in relation to the gospel. Even in the primitive churches some, instead of delivering their divine message with the simplicity that became them, made it, in many instances, an occasion of promulgating their own vain and superstitious notions; thus administering to strife and contention, where they should have laboured only for the edification of souls in faith and love. St. Paul, in order to correct this, directed Timothy to protest against it as an abuse of the gospel, and to make it appear that the gospel was in no respect to be blamed for these evils; since, in its own nature, it tended only to love. "The end of the commandment is charity, out of a ure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."

Simeon avails himself of this Topic in discoursing on the divinity of Christ, from Col. ii. 9: Under his first division he observes,

There are some texts which, to a superficial observer, bear somewhat of a similar aspect with that before us. For instance, it is said in this very epistle, "It hath pleased the Father that in Christ should all fulness dwell," chap. i. 19; and out of his fulness we are said to receive, even grace for grace; John i. 16. There is yet a stronger expression in the Epistle to the Ephesians, wherein we are exhorted to contemplate the love of Christ, till we are "filled with all the fulness of God;" Eph. iii. 18, 19. Nay more; we are said ourselves to be "the fulness of Him who filleth all in all." From such Scriptures as these it is argued, by many, that the fulness spoken of in my text is only a fulness of gifts committed to Christ for the use of his church; and that we may as well assume to ourselves the character of the Godhead, as give it to him; since we, no less than he, are said to be "filled with all the fulness

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of God." But, on a closer inspection, there will be found a wide difference between all the foregoing passages and our text. The fulness spoken of in the text is the fulness of "the Godhead;" residing in Christ, not symbolically and for a season, as the Shechinah did in the tabernacle, but corporeally, substantially, permanently. There is no doubt a reference here to the Shechinah, which was a shadowy representation of the Deity. But the reference is rather in a way of contrast than of comparison; for in my text it is not *God* who is spoken of, and who is frequently said to dwell in his people, but the *Godhead*. Nor is Christ said to "*be filled with*" it, but to have it *essentially dwelling* in him; and this, not in a type or shadow, but really, vitally, necessarily, immutably: "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Manton, in his sermon on 2 Thess. i. 11, distinguishes faith from assurance, and points out the evil consequences of confounding them. He observes,

There is an unusual mistake of faith among Christians, as if it were only a strong and blind confidence, which admits no doubt in the soul concerning their own salvation; but this is a vain conceit, which both hardens the impenitent and discourageth the serious. It *hardens the impenitent;* for this strong confidence of their own good estate may happen to be the greatest unbelief in the world: for in many it is a believing that to be true, the flat contrary of which God hath revealed in his word. 1 Cor. vi. 9 "Be not deceived; know ye not that the unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God?" They flatter themselves with the belief of the contrary, and if they can but bless themselves in their own hearts, and get the victory over their consciences and fears of wrath, and cry, Peace, peace, loudly enough, they think all is well; and so embrace an imagination and dream of their own true faith This confidence is absolutely inconsistent with the doctrine of salvation by Christ. It likewise *discourageth the serious,*

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who foolishly vex their own souls, and disquiet themselves in vain, thinking they have no faith because they have not such a peace as doth exclude all doubts and fears about their eternal estate; whereas faith is a receiving God's testimony concerning his Son, or such an embracing of the doctrine of salvation by Christ that we set ourselves about the duties required, that we may be capable of the blessings offered, even reconciliation with God and the everlasting fruition of him in glory. This mistake of the nature of faith leadeth Christians to most of their perplexities. Do you receive the word as the word of God? Then thankfully accept Christ as the offered remedy, and take his prescribed way to come to God; depend on his mercy, and continue in obedience to his precepts; and you will soon find that he is the "author of eternal salvation to all that obey him." Heb. v. 9.

He then proceeds to explain what is meant by the work of faith, and in doing this he introduces a distinction between the internal and the external acts of faith. The following is the substance of this part of his sermon:

The work of faith, in general, is all that work and business which belongs to faith.

More particularly let me tell you that there are two sorts of acts ascribed to faith, elicite and imperate, internal and external.

First: The internal acts of faith are,

1. Assent to the truth of the doctrine of salvation by Christ, which has a just title to our firmest belief and choicest respect. 1 Tim. i. 15.

2. Consent: either to accept Christ for our Redeemer and Saviour (John i. 12); or receiving the word, as it is stated, in the form of a covenant, Acts ii. 41: "They received the word gladly," resolving to live by the rule, and earnestly to seek the happiness, of that covenant God hath made with the world in Christ.

3. Dependance, or leaving the weight of our souls and

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all our eternal interests, on this foundation-stone, which God hath laid in Sion; or depending on his promises, and looking for the performance of them.

Secondly: The external and imperate acts.

1. A bold and open confession of Christ, and owning his ways, notwithstanding the sharpest persecutions. This is the work of faith as put into the covenant; Rom. x. 9. There the duty of a Christian is made to consist of two parts; one concerneth the heart, the other the mouth. There is believing with the heart, which is the internal principle; the other for the mouth, and that is open confession or profession, in spite of all persecution and danger: for all Christians are saved either as martyrs or as confessors, and therefore Christianity is called a profession; Heb. iii. 1. And because this exposeth to danger, we must venture all to make this profession. And that is the reason why the kingdom of God is compared to a wise merchant, that sold all for the pearl of price; Matt. xiii. 45, 46. It is the work of faith; therefore it is said, Heb. iii. 6, "Whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of hope firm to the end; παῤῥησίαν καὶ τὸ καύχημα τῆς ἐλπίδος, that is, if we undauntedly continue our Christian profession and cheerfulness in all that befalleth us for Christ's sake, knowing we can be no losers by Christ. Heb. x. 23: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that hath promised." Here faith produceth its work, when we are fortified against the terrors of the world, and the dangers feared do not make us waver in the ways of Christ or the profession of his name. And this is that work of faith which is accomplished with power, meaning the divine power; as Col. i. 11. It is the grace and power of God that beareth us up under the afflictions we meet with in our Christian course. So 2 Tim. i. 8: "Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, by the power of God." And here, "The Lord fulfil in you the work of faith with power;"

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that is, complete in you all the good fruits of faith and patience, or enable you to bear whatever you suffer for embracing the truths of the gospel.

2. The next is ready obedience to the will of God, forsaking all sin, and walking in all newness of life to his praise and glory. Then is our practice conformable to our faith. And faith is said to work by love, Gal. v. 6: that is, to produce holiness and obedience; when the drift and bent of our lives is for God and heaven; to please, glorify, and enjoy him. What we are to believe and do is the sum of religion; and the one is inferred out of the other: doing arises out of believing, as the branch does out of the root: 2 Pet. i. 5. And therefore our obedience is called the obedience of faith (Rom. xvi. 26), because it is animated and inspired by it.

Well, then, that which the apostle intendeth here is not the internal but the exterior acts of faith. For the drift of his prayer is, that God would enable them to ride out the storm of those troubles which came upon them for the gospel's sake. And a Christian, in judging his condition, will better discern it in the external acts than the internal. For the upright cannot always discern the interior acts, or the strength of them; but the exterior are more sensibly and visibly brought forth in the view of conscience. God seeth what is in our hearts, but we see it not till the effects manifest it. The sap is not seen, when the apples and fruits do visibly appear. Like as we judge of the soundness of men's repentance by the fruits thereof, otherwise men may be deceived, and think there is a change of mind when there is not (when John suspected the Pharisees, Matt. iii. 8, he said, Bring forth fruit meet for repentance; yea, the apostle exhorted men of better temper than they to repent, and turn to God, and to do works meet for repentance, Acts xxvi. 20); so we judge of men's fear of God, not by the internal act of reverence, but by departing from evil, Prov. viii. 13; of their love, by their obe-

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dience; John xiv. 21, and 1 John v. 3. So of their faith, by their holy and heavenly walking: there is no faith in them that live an unsanctified life; but where men set their faces heavenward, make it their business to please God, here is true faith; they have received God's testimony, and therefore upon the encouragement of his promises continue with patience in well doing.

Besides, hypocrites will pretend a strong faith, and be ready to charge with injustice and injury those who shall question their belief of the doctrine of salvation by Christ; but they deny in their practice what they assert in their words. Every considerate man may collect from their actions that they have no true sense of the being of God; for they are not watchful over their own ways, and their actions are so absolutely contrary to God's laws, threats, and promises, yea to all that is known of God, that certainly they do not believe there is a God, or are not in earnest when they think and speak so. It may be their mouths are not let loose to that boldness openly to deny or question God's being; but their dealings are so false and detestable that a man may certainly conclude they never expect to be accountable to God for what they do. So for the belief of Christianity, many seem to believe as Christians, but live as infidels; nominally they are Christians, but really deny the faith, and therefore the surest mark will be holy conversation and godliness.

Simeon largely exemplifies this Topic in a skeleton on John iv. 41, 42: "And many more believed because of his own word," &c. He observes, in his introduction, that many of the Samaritans entertained high thoughts of our Lord's character, from the testimony of the woman whom he met at Jacob's well; but afterwards, from personal acquaintance with him, they were convinced that he was the Saviour of the world. He then takes occasion to,

I. Distinguish between the kinds of faith here mentioned.

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The faith which the Samaritans first exercised was founded on mere report. The woman had testified to them that Jesus had told her all the secrets of her heart, even such as could be known only to the most high God; and had appealed to them whether this was not a convincing evidence that he was the long-expected Messiah. Her argument was plain and conclusive; and, as she had no motive for deceiving them, they believed her report of him, and acknowledged the justness of her conclusion. We do not mean to disparage this kind of faith: it was good as far as it went; and it was productive of solid benefit to the persons who possessed it, inasmuch as it removed all their prejudices, and disposed them to form a more accurate judgment for themselves. But still we cannot regard this faith in any other light than as a speculative assent, grounded upon human testimony. It seems to have been not unlike to that which is so common amongst ourselves, which arises from a view of the evidences of our religion. We see that all the ancient types and prophecies were fulfilled in Christ, and that most unquestionable miracles were wrought by him and his apostles in confirmation of his word; and therefore we say that he is and must be the Messiah. Yet those who are most versed in this kind of reasoning are not always suitably affected with it: their knowledge of Christianity is, in many cases, merely speculative, residing in their heads, but never descending into their hearts, nor influencing their lives. We cannot therefore consider this as a saving faith: being unproductive of good works, it is dead; and, if carried no further, will leave the possessor of it in the state of those unhappy spirits of whom it is said, "they believe and tremble."

The faith to which they afterwards attained was founded on their own experience. During the two days that our blessed Lord staid among them, they heard him discourse on the things relating to his kingdom. They perceived that he "spake as never man spake;" and "his word was

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with power." As it had before proved the heart of the woman at the well, so it searched their hearts, and disclosed to them all their hidden abominations. It showed them that they themselves were lost, yea, that the whole world also was in a perishing condition; and that he was sent of God on purpose to deliver them. From the correspondence which they saw between the character he sustained and the necessities they felt, they were assured "that he was the Christ, the Saviour of the world;" and they determined to rely on him, as their Saviour and their Redeemer.

Now this was saving faith: it brought them fully to Christ for the ends for which he was sent into the world: "with their hearts they believed on him unto righteousness; and with their mouths they made confession unto salvation." This faith was very different from that which they first exercised: it was more *distinct*, more *assured*, more *influential:* they had more full and complete views of the objects of Christ's mission—they "had within themselves a witness" of the suitableness and sufficiency of his salvation—and they instantly became his open and avowed disciples, in spite of all their former prejudices and the prejudices of all around them.

He then proceeds to notice—

II. The importance of making this distinction.

Two facts will serve to illustrate this:

1. For want of *distinguishing aright* many sincere persons are distressed. The nature of saving faith has, as might well be expected, been a subject of controversy in the Christian world. A full assurance of our own personal acceptance with God has been supposed by many to be an essential part of true faith; and hence multitudes who have really "fled to Christ for refuge, as to the hope set before them," are disquieted from day to day because they do not feel in themselves that assurance. But God does not require us to believe more than he himself has

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revealed; and where has he revealed that any particular individual amongst us is in a state of salvation? or where has he said that the belief of our own personal interest in Christ is necessary in order to our obtaining an interest in him? Indeed such a declaration would be absurd. As for straining metaphorical expressions, in order to found doctrines upon them, it is injudicious in the extreme. It is far better to examine what that faith was which was exercised by the saints of old, and, if we do that, we shall always find that the faith by which they were saved was a faith of affiance, and not that which is generally [but improperly] called a faith of assurance.

2. For want of *distinguishing at all* many insincere persons are ruined. The generality of persons seem to have no idea of any faith beyond that of a mere assent to certain propositions; and, if they have never set themselves to oppose Christianity, they take for granted that they are believers. They were born in a Christian land, and have been educated in the Christian faith, and therefore they suppose that all is well. If they are licentious in their conduct, they will allow perhaps that they are deficient in their morals; yet they never suspect that they are materially wrong in their faith. Is it not important, then, that they should be told that "he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh?" Surely, whatever such persons may imagine, if ever they be brought to a saving knowledge of Christ, they will say, Now we believe in Christ, not because we have been told by our parents that Christianity is true, but because we have heard him ourselves speaking to us in his word, and have felt that he is exactly such a Saviour as our necessities require.

*Define.* In order to impart our ideas to others, with clearness and force, we must not only distinguish them from other ideas with which they may have been confounded, but we must proceed to define what is thus distinguished.

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This, of course, requires great care and attention; for, in order to arrive at just and adequate definitions, we must take an exact view of the idea to be described, trace it to its original principles, and mark the several simple perceptions that enter into its composition; we must also consider the particular manner in which these elementary ideas are combined, in order to form that precise conception for which the term we make use of stands. Every definition should not only contain a distinct enumeration of all the original ideas out of which the complex one is formed, but the order and manner of combining them into one conception must also be clearly explained. Where a definition has these requisites, nothing is wanting to its perfection; because every one who hears or reads it and understands the terms, seeing at once what ideas he is to join together, and also in what manner, can at pleasure form in his own mind the complex conception answering to the term defined. The true and proper end of definition is to present to the hearer just and accurate copies of our ideas; and in defining any thing we ought by no means to satisfy ourselves with the descriptions derived from any received system of morals or theology, but to think for ourselves, and transcribe the appearance which any subject makes to our minds.

A beautiful example of definition is given in 1 Cor. xiii. The definition of charity there proceeds entirely upon qualities of actual utility and positive experience, each varying from the rest, and all combining to render the definition complete; and from all the dictionaries in the world, and all the labour of a philosopher or a whole college of philosophers, a better specimen could not be formed. We may also mention here the definition of heavenly wisdom by St. James, chap. iii. 17, 18.

*Divide.* Having distinguished one thing from another thing, or from several species, and having presented a just definition, we proceed to divide. The trial is over,

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and nothing remains but to pass sentence. All that Claude has given is the following: "To divide regards either different species of the genus, or different parts of the whole; and it may sometimes be used profitably. Thus, in speaking of God's providence in general, you may consider the extent of that providence to which we are subject: 1. Natural causes; 2. Contingent; 3. Independent; 4. Good and bad; 5. Small and great." Robinson does not mend the matter; for he blunders upon the sermonizing species of division, and refers to that part of Claude in the early part of the work for his illustration; a thing as remote from the point as east from west. The truth seems to be, they were at the end weary of their work, or had other important matters to engage their attention. However, as I observed above, having passed the subject of examination through the needful state of analyzation, having perceived its qualities and degrees, having distinguished and defined each separate part, or, as our old divines used to say, "*cleared the way*" to discussion, you proceed to establish your propositions, to divide, to pronounce sentence upon them: this is, in Scripture language, "to separate the precious from the vile."

I do not know that I can give a better example of such dividing than that which is already given in Bishop Saunderson's discourse in this second volume. You will perceive that this penetrating author, to whom, as far as is possible for man, all things and qualities seem to be accurately exposed, distingishes and defines the devices of man and Jehovah's counsels, and then divides the several considerations into a mode of discussion; if there is any defect here, as an example, the definitions are too much mixed with the divisions upon them; but this defect need not prevent the student from perceiving the point here hinted at.

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## TOPIC XXVII.

### COMPARE THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE TEXT TOGETHER.

This is a very useful Topic, and it will often furnish very beautiful considerations, if we know how to make a proper use of it. For example: This text of St. Paul to the Romans, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." You may make a very edifying comparison between this last part, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit," with the first part, "There is no condemnation;" and you may remark that, in the one, the apostle expresses what God does in favour of the faithful; and in the other, what the faithful do for the glory of God. God absolves them; and they live holily, and devote themselves to good works. God imposes holiness upon us in justification; and justification is the parent of holiness: take away justification, and there cannot possibly be any good works; take away good works, and there is no more justification.

You may also compare this last part with the condition in which the believer is here considered; he is *in Christ Jesus;* and remark that these two things perfectly agree together, because Jesus Christ is the true cause of our justification; and sanctification is the principal effect of our communion with Jesus Christ.

So again, in this beautiful passage in the second of Ephesians: "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; by grace are ye saved." You may oppose and compare these two subjects in the text, *dead in sin* and *rich in mercy,* as being two extremes,—extreme misery and extreme mercy; one in us, and the other in God. The greatness of our crimes mani-

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fests the riches of God's mercy; and the riches of his mercy absorb the greatness of our crimes. Had our sins been less, it must indeed have been mercy to pardon our sins, but not *riches* of mercy. If God had been only lightly inclined to mercy, he might indeed have pardoned smaller sins, but this would never have extended to persons *dead* in their sins; this belongs only to extraordinary and abounding mercy.

I now add an example, bearing in some degree on the same point as the preceding observation, from Mr. Simeon's Appendix, vol. i., p. 279. The text is, Ruth i. 15—17: "She (Naomi) said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee," &c.

The partings of friends and relatives are common; and, inasmuch as they give birth to a great variety of emotions in the mind, they elicit the inward character with great fidelity. Such is the incident which we are now about to consider, and which will reflect peculiar light on the dispositions of one who, though a Moabitess by birth, was one of the progenitors of our blessed Lord.

From this farewell scene, and the distinguished excellence of Ruth's behaviour, I shall be led to mark her character,

I. Simply as here depicted. In the circumstances before us, she approves herself a pattern,

1. Of filial piety. Her mother-in-law, Naomi, had long endeared herself to her; and now was about to part with her, and to return to the land of Israel. Ruth would not suffer her to depart alone, but determined to adhere to her to the latest hour of her life. Nothing could shake her resolution: she determined to renounce all her old relatives, and the prospects she might have in her native land, and to cleave stedfastly to Naomi, even unto death; and the manner in which she refused to acquiesce in her

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mother's proposal was tender and affectionate in the extreme: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee." This, in other words, was as if she had said, "You know that any request of thine, however difficult or self-denying it were, would be obeyed with the utmost alacrity; but to ask me to forsake thee, this is too much; it would break my heart: I could not do it: I pray you to forbear putting me to so severe a trial. 'Intreat me not to leave thee;' for the alternative of parting with thee, or disobeying thy command, is as a sword in my bones, a wound which I cannot possibly endure."

2. Of vital godliness. This was at the root, and was the true spring of her determined resolution: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." She had been instructed by her mother in the knowledge of the true God; and she determined to consecrate herself to his service, and to take her portion with his people. This was very particularly noticed by Boaz, as no less conspicuous than her filial piety: chap. ii. 11, 12. She acted in conformity with the injunction that was afterwards given by our Lord, "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

II. As compared with that of Orpah and Naomi.

Compare it with that of Orpah. Orpah loved her mother-in-law; and, at first, determined not to part from her. In answer to the suggestions of Naomi, she joined with Ruth in saying, "Surely we will return with thee unto thy people." But, when a faithful representation was given her, respecting the sacrifices she would be called to make, she repented of her good intentions, and, taking an affectionate leave of her mother-in-law, "returned to *her own* people, and to her idol-gods." Like the rich youth in the gospel, she departed, reluctantly indeed, yet finally and for ever. "Orpah," it is said, "kissed her mother-in-law: but Ruth clave unto her."

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Compare it, also, with that of Naomi. That Naomi was a pious character we have no doubt; and amiable too; for by her conduct she conciliated the regard of both her daughters-in-law, who, though Moabitesses by birth, were through her convinced of the superior excellence of the Jewish religion, and the superior happiness of those who were imbued with it; and we cannot but earnestly call the attention of Christian parents to this trait of Naomi's character. For there are too many who, whilst they profess godliness, make it odious to all who come in contact with them, and especially to those who are dependant on them. Their tempers are so hasty, so imperious, so ungoverned, that their very daughters are glad of an occasion to get from under their roof. I must tell all such professors that they are a disgrace to their profession; and that if religion do not make us lovely and amiable in all our family relations, it does nothing for us, but deceives us to our ruin. Yet I cannot think very highly of Naomi's character when I see the advice which she gave to her daughters. She loved them, it is true; but her love was of too carnal a nature: for she had more respect to their temporal welfare than to the welfare of their souls. Some would offer an apology for her; that she only intended to try the sincerity of their love. But, supposing she had done this in the first instance, which, however, she had no right to do, especially when they had both said, "Surely we will return with thee unto thy people;" yet when she saw, unhappily, that she had prevailed with Orpah, had she any right to urge Ruth to follow her sad example? Should she not rather have rent her garments, yea, and torn the very hair from her head with anguish, at the thought of having so fatally prevailed to ruin her daughter's soul? Should she not rather have striven to undo what she had done to Orpah, than continue to exert the same fatal influence with Ruth? Should not the advice of Moses to Hobab have been hers to both of

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them, "Come with me, and God will do you good?" Naomi! thou hast given us a picture too often realized in the present day; in thee we see a mother more anxious about the providing of husbands for her daughters than the saving of their souls. Thou didst love thy daughters, it is true; but thy concern for their temporal welfare overpowered all other considerations, and not only kept thee from leading their minds to God, but actually induced thee to exert thine influence in opposition to their good desires: thou wast a tempter to them when thou shouldst have done all in thy power to keep them from temptation, and have had thy whole soul bent on securing their everlasting salvation.

I must here, as in several cases formerly, extend the Topic to a view beyond the original intention in favour of the agreement and consistency of one text of Scripture with other texts, in order to fix on the mind of the student an impression of the unspeakable importance of *parallels*. This subject might have been noticed under our sixteenth Topic, but I hope it will not be deemed much out of place here. It is a happy circumstance that very great facilities are provided by the labours of biblical men for comparing one part of Scripture with another. We owe a debt of gratitude to God and to these worthy men for these facilities. Bagster's Comprehensive Bible contains the most copious collection of parallels; next to this is Scott's Bible: Brown's Self-interpreting Bible is also invaluable; this can be had for thirty shillings in boards. The low price is owing to the immense number that have been printed, so that they are depreciated below their real value. In this work the parallels given are not so numerous or so precise as those of Scott, yet they will be generally found sufficient. Next in rank is Cann's Bible, octavo, and after this work the common Oxford quartos. I might indeed have named Crutwell's Concordance of parallels; but this is scarce and dear. Craddock's Knowledge and Practice, of similar



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utility, is of low price and very good. Great help will also be found in Cruden's Concordance. Some one or two of these works might be obtained.

The study of parallels is recommended by the highest authorities in sacred literature, and I cannot accomplish my own purpose, or promote the interests of the student, better than by giving such authorities or examples; and elementary works cannot well be too strongly corroborated by them. The first is from Bishop Van Mildart's (bishop of Durham) Lectures.

When, in any ordinary composition, a passage occurs of doubtful meaning with respect to the sentiments or doctrine it conveys, the obvious course of proceeding is to examine what the author himself has delivered in other parts of his work upon the subject; to weigh well the force of any particular expressions he is accustomed to use; and inquire what there might be, in the occasion or circumstances under which he wrote, tending to throw further light upon the immediate object he had in view. This is only to render common justice to the writer; it is necessary both for the discovery of the meaning, and to secure him against any wanton charge of error or inconsistency. Now, if this may be justly required in any work of uninspired composition, how much more indispensable must it be when we sit in judgment upon the sacred volume, in which (if we acknowledge its divine original) it is impossible to imagine a failure in judgment or integrity!

The following is from the Rev. H. F. Burder, who has acquired the reputation of a very correct author.

God has been pleased, in sundry portions and in divers manners, to speak unto us in his word, Heb. i. 1; but in all the books of Scripture we may trace an admirable unity of design, an intimate connexion of its facts, and a complete harmony of its doctrines. In some instances the same truths are conveyed nearly in the same mode of

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expression; in other instances the same sentiments are clothed with a beautiful variety of language. While we are interested in discovering some of the indications of mental diversity among the sacred writers, we clearly see that the whole volume of revelation is distinguished by a certain characteristic style and phraseology altogether its own, and which for simplicity, dignity, energy, and freeness, must be allowed to have no parallel. Now if there be in the various parts of Scripture such important coincidences of sentiment, of language, and of idiom, it is evident we proceed on just and rational principles in comparing together passages that have some just degree of resemblance, and in applying those, the meaning of which is clear, to the illustration of such as are involved in some degree of obscurity.

Bishop Horsley furnishes a good illustration of the point in hand, and, although it is long, I cannot persuade myself to mutilate it, since it affords a fine specimen of biblical criticism, of energetic conception, of bold yet simple language. It is also an incomparable exhibition of explicatory discourse, and will add to what I have written on that subject (Lecture III.), and refresh the mind of the student, so that several purposes will be promoted at the same time. The text adopted is Ps. xcvii. 7: "Worship him, all ye gods;" but in fact the whole Psalm is explicated.

It should be a rule, with every one who would read the Holy Scriptures with advantage and improvement, to compare every text which may seem important for the doctrine it contains, or remarkable for the turn of expression, with the parallel passages in other parts of holy writ; that is, with the passages in which the subject matter is the same, the sense equivalent, or the turn of expression similar. These parallel passages are easily found by the marginal references in the Bibles of the larger form. It were to be wished, indeed, that no Bibles were printed



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without the margin. It is to be hoped that the objection obviously arising from the necessary augmentation in the price of the book, may some time or other be removed by the charity of religious associations. Meanwhile those who can afford to purchase the larger Bibles should be diligent in the improvement of the means with which Providence has furnished them. Particular diligence should be used in comparing the parallel texts of the Old and the New Testaments. When you read the Old Testament, if you perceive by the margin that any particular passage is cited in the New, turn to that passage of the New to which the margin refers, that you may see in what manner, in what sense, and to what purpose, the words of the more ancient are alleged by the later writer, who, in many instances, may be supposed to have received clearer light upon the same subject. On the other hand, when in the New Testament you meet with citations from the Old, always consult the original writer, that you may have the satisfaction of judging for yourselves how far the passage alleged makes for the argument which it is brought to support. In doing this you will imitate the example of the godly Jews of Berea, which is recorded with approbation in the Acts of the Apostles (xvii.), who, when Paul and Silas reasoned with them out of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, clearly setting before them the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and the accomplishment of those prophecies in Jesus, whom they preached, "searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so." These Berean Jews compared the parallel passages of St. Paul's oral doctrine with the written Scriptures of the Old Testament. And *we now* should with equal diligence compare the written doctrine of St. Paul, and of his fellow-labourers, with the writings of the Old Testament. It is incredible, to any one who has not in some degree made the experiment, what a proficiency may be made in that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation, by studying the Scrip-

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tures in this manner, without any other commentary or exposition than what the different parts of the sacred volume mutually furnish for each other. I will not scruple to assert that the most illiterate Christian, if he can but read his English Bible, and will take the pains to read it in this manner, will not only attain all that practical knowledge which is necessary to his salvation, but, by God's blessing, he will become learned in every thing relating to his religion in such degree that he will not be liable to be misled, either by the refined arguments or by the false assertions of those who endeavour to engraft their own opinion upon the oracle of God. He may safely be ignorant of all philosophy except what is to be learned from the sacred books; which indeed contain the highest philosophy adapted to the lowest apprehensions. He may safely remain ignorant of all history, except so much of the history of the first ages of the Jewish and of the Christian church as is to be gathered from the canonical books of the Old and New Testament. Let him study these in the manner I recommend, and let him never cease to pray for the illumination of that Spirit by which these books were dictated; and the whole compass of abstruse philosophy and recondite history shall furnish no argument with which the perverse will of man shall be able to shake this learned Christian's faith. The Bible thus studied will indeed prove to be, what we Protestants esteem it, a certain and sufficient rule of faith and practice, a helmet of salvation which alone may quench the fiery darts of the wicked. My text, I trust, will prove a striking instance of the truth of these assertions.

If in argument with any of the false teachers of the present day I were to allege this text of the psalmist in proof of our Lord's divinity, my antagonist would probably reply that our Lord is not once mentioned in the psalm; that the subject of the psalm is an assertion of the proper divinity

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of Jehovah, the God of the Israelites, as distinguished from the imaginary deities which the heathen worshipped. This psalm therefore which proposes Jehovah, the God of the Israelites, as the sole object of worship to men and angels, is alleged, he would say, to no purpose in justification of worship paid to another person. And, to any one who might know nothing more of the true sense of this passage than may appear in the words taken by themselves, my adversary might seem to have the better in the argument. I think I should seem to myself to stand confuted, if I knew no more of the meaning of the text, or rather of the inspired song of which it makes a part, than an inattentive reader might collect from a hasty view of its general purport. But observe the references in the margin of the Bible, and you will find that a parallel passage occurs in the epistle to the Hebrews, in the first chapter, at the sixth verse. Turn to this passage of the epistle, and there you will find this text of the psalmist cited by St. Paul to this very purpose, namely, to prove that adoration is due from the blessed angels of God to the only-begotten Son; for thus he reasons: "When he bringeth in the First-begotten into the world he saith, and let all the angels of God worship him." The only passage in the Old Testament, as the Hebrew text now stands, is this seventh verse of the ninety-seventh psalm. The words of the psalmist indeed are these, "Worship him, all ye gods." The apostle, that he might clearly exclude a plurality of gods, while he asserts the Godhead of the Son, thinks proper to explain the psalmist's words, by substituting "all the angels of God" for "all the gods." But it is very evident that the First-begotten was, in the apostle's judgment, the object of worship propounded by the psalmist, otherwise these words of the psalmist, upon which he calls upon the angels to worship Jehovah, were alleged to no purpose in proof of the Son's natural pre-eminence above the angels. For either

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the Son is the object of worship intended by the psalmist, or the Son himself is to bear a part in the worship so universally enjoined.

But further, the collation of the psalmist's text with the apostle's citation will not only enable the unlearned Christian to discover a sense of the psalmist's words not very obvious in the words themselves, but it will also give him certain although summary information upon a point of ecclesiastical antiquity of great importance, upon which the illiterate cannot be informed by any other means. In the late attempts to revive the Ebionæan* heresy, much stress has been laid, by the leaders of the impious confederacy, upon the opinions of the primitive church of Jerusalem. They tell you, with great confidence, that the Redeemer was never worshipped, nor his divinity acknowledged, by the members of that church. The assertion has indeed no other foundation but the ignorance of those who make it, who confound a miserable sect which separated from the church of Jerusalem, with the church itself. But how is the truth of the fact to be proved to the illiterate Christian, unread in the history of the primitive ages, who yet must feel some alarm and disquietude when he is told that he has been catechised in a faith never held by those first and best Christians, the converts of the apostles? Holy writ, if he is diligent in consulting it, will relieve his scruples, and remove his doubts, not only upon the principal matter in dispute, but upon this particular historical question. It must be obvious to every understanding, that when any passage in the Old Testament is cited by writers of the New, in confirmation of any particular doctrine, without any disquisition concerning the sense of the citation, or any attempt to fix a particular sense upon it which may suit the writer's purpose; it must be evident, I say, that a text thus cited was generally understood at the time by those to whom the argument

* See Buck's Theological Dictionary on the word.

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was addressed. For a text alleged in any sense not generally admitted, could be no proof to those who should be inclined to call in question the sense imposed. The Hebrews, therefore, to whom the apostle produces this text of the psalmist in proof of the high dignity of the Redeemer's nature, agreed with the apostle concerning the sense of the psalmist's words. They well understood that the psalmist calls upon the angels to worship the only-begotten Son. And who were these Hebrews? The very name imports that they were Jews by birth; they were indeed the Jewish converts settled in Palestine. And since the epistle was written during St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, which might easily be made to appear from the epistle itself, and St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome ended about the thirtieth year after our Lord's ascension, they were no other than the *first race* of Jewish Christians, who agreed with St. Paul that the Redeemer is the object of worship propounded to the angels by the psalmist. And thus by this plain remark, and by the authority of the sacred books, the unlearned Christian may settle his own mind, and put to shame and silence the disturbers of his faith.

But this is not the whole of the information which the unlearned Christian may draw from the psalmist's text, compared with the apostle's citation. The apostle cites the psalmist's words as spoken when the First-begotten was introduced into the world, that is to say, to mankind; for the word in the original literally signifies, not the universe, but this globe which is inhabited by men, to which the First-begotten was in these later ages introduced by the promulgation of the gospel. Now, since the occasion upon which these words were spoken was an introduction of the First Begotten into the world, if these words are no where to be found but in the ninety-seventh psalm, it follows that this ninety-seventh psalm is that introduction of the First-begotten into the world of which the apostle speaks. Hence

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the unlearned Christian may derive this useful information, that the true subject of the ninety-seventh psalm, as it was understood by St. Paul and by the church at Jerusalem, to which this epistle is addressed, within thirty years after our Lord's ascension, when that church must have been entirely composed of our Lord's own followers and the immediate converts of the apostles, was not, as it might seem to any one not deeply versed in the prophetic language, an assertion of God's natural dominion over the universe, but a prophecy of the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom by the preaching of the gospel, and the general conversion of idolaters to the service of the true God. The First-begotten is the Lord, or rather the Jehovah, for that is the word used in the original, whose kingdom is proclaimed as an occasion of joy and thanksgiving to the whole world.

And that this was no arbitrary interpretation of the psalm, imagined by enthusiasts or invented by impostors to make the sacred oracles accord with their own conceits or with their own designs, will appear by a closer inspection of the psalm itself, which cannot be consistently expounded of any other king or of any other kingdom.

That Jehovah's kingdom, in some sense or other, is the subject of this divine song, cannot be made a question; for thus it opens—"Jehovah reigneth." The psalm therefore must be understood, either of God's natural kingdom over his whole creation, of his particular kingdom over the Jews, his chosen people, or of that kingdom which is called in the New Testament the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of Christ. God's peculiar kingdom over the Jews cannot be the subject of this psalm, because all nations of the earth are called upon to rejoice in the acknowledgment of this great truth, "Jehovah reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the many isles be glad thereof." The same consideration, that Jehovah's kingdom is mentioned as a subject of general thanksgiving, proves that



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God's universal dominion over his whole creation cannot be the kingdom in the prophet's mind; for in this kingdom a great majority of the ancient world, the idolaters, were considered, not as subjects who might rejoice in the glory of their monarch, but as rebels who had every thing to fear from his just resentment. God's government of the world was to them no cause of joy, otherwise than as the erection of Christ's kingdom, which was to be the means of their deliverance, was a part of the general scheme of Providence. It remains, therefore, that Christ's kingdom is that kingdom of Jehovah which the inspired poet celebrates as the occasion of universal joy. And this will further appear by the sequel of the song. After four verses, in which the transcendent glory, the irresistible power, and inscrutable perfection of the Lord, who to the joy of all nations reigneth, are painted in poetical images, taken partly from the awful scene on Sinai which accompanied the delivery of the law, partly from other manifestations of God's presence with the Israelites in their journey through the wilderness; he proceeds, in the sixth verse, "The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory." We read in the nineteenth psalm that "the heavens declare the glory of God." And the glory of God, the power and the intelligence of the Creator, is indeed visibly declared in the fabric of the material world. But I cannot see how the structure of the heavens can demonstrate the *righteousness* of God. Wisdom and power may be displayed in the contrivance of an inanimate machine; but righteousness cannot appear in the arrangement of the parts, or the direction of the motions of lifeless matter. The heavens, therefore, in their external structure, cannot declare their Maker's righteousness: but the heavens, in another sense, attested the righteousness of Christ, when the voice from heaven declared him the beloved Son of God, in whom the Father was well pleased; and when the preternatural darkness of the sun

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at the crucifixion, and other agonies of nature, drew that confession from the heathen centurion who attended the execution, that the suffering Jesus was the Son of God. "And all the people see his glory." It is much to be regretted that our translators, over-studious of the purity of their English style, have, through the whole Bible, neglected a distinction constantly observed in the original, between *people* in the singular and *peoples* in the plural. The word *people*, in the singular, for the most part denotes God's chosen people, the Jewish nation, unless any other particular people happen to be the subject of discourse. But *peoples*, in the plural, is put for all the other races of mankind, as distinct from the chosen people. The word here is in the plural form, "and all the peoples see his glory." But when, or in what sense, did any of the peoples, the idolatrous nations, see the glory of God? Literally they never saw his glory. The effulgence of the Shechinah never was displayed to them, except when it blazed forth upon the Egyptians to strike them with a panic; or when the towering pillar of flame which marshalled the Israelites in the wilderness, was seen by the inhabitants of Palestine and Arabia as a threatening meteor in their sky. Intellectually no idolaters ever saw the glory of God, for they never acknowledged his power and Godhead; had they thus seen his glory, they had ceased to be idolaters. But *all the peoples*, upon the preaching of the gospel, saw the glory of Christ. They saw it literally in the miracles performed by his apostles; they saw it spiritually when they perceived the purity of his precepts, when they acknowledged the truth of his doctrine, when they embraced the profession of Christianity, and owned Christ for their Saviour and their God. The psalmist goes on, "Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods." In the original this verse has not at all the form of a malediction, which it has acquired in our

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translation from the use of the strong word *confounded*. "Let them be ashamed:" this is the utmost that the psalmist says. The prayer that they may be ashamed of their folly and repent of it, is very different from an imprecation of confusion. But in truth the psalmist rather seems to speak prophetically, without any thing either of prayer or imprecation: "They shall be ashamed." Having seen the glory of Christ they shall be ashamed of the idols which, in the times of their ignorance, they worshipped. In the eighth and ninth verses, looking forward to the times when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in, and the remnant of Israel shall turn to the Lord, he describes the daughters of Judah as rejoicing at the news of the mercy extended to the Gentile world, and exulting in the universal extent of Jehovah's kingdom, and the general acknowledgment of his Godhead. In the tenth verse, having in view, as it should seem, the sufferings which the first preachers were destined to endure, he exhorts those who love Jehovah to adhere at all hazards to their duty, in the assurance that their powerful Lord, on whom they have fixed their love, "preserveth the souls of his saints, and delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked." "Light," he adds, "is sown for the righteous;" or, to render the words more strictly, "Light is shed over the Just One, and gladness upon the upright of heart." The *just* and the *just one* are two different words; the one a collective noun expressing a multitude, the other expressive of a single person. These two words are unfortunately confounded in our English Bibles. The Just One is, I think, in many passages of the Psalms, of which I take this to be one, an appellation which exclusively belongs to Christ in his human character. Light for splendour is an easy image for a condition of prosperity and grandeur. "Light is shed over the Just One, the man Christ Jesus, who is now exalted at the right hand of God." And this light shed on him is a sense of glad-

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ness to all the upright in heart. "Rejoice in Jehovah, therefore, ye righteous; rejoice in him by whom ye are yourselves united to the first principle of goodness, being, power, happiness, and glory; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness."

Now, besides the purposes I hinted at before, this sermon is a fine vindication of the divinity of Christ, and it teaches us how we should explain the Psalms in a manner corresponding with the view which Horsley, Horne, and many others, have taken of these sacred compositions.*

* The above excellent remarks on parallelisms of texts lead us to reflect on the parallelisms of *subjects* which I have attempted to establish throughout the Topics; these form a point of observation which may be called the *doctrine of transitions*, a passing over to relative branches of divine knowledge (see Topic iv.). These transitions admit of a great variety of particular applications of the leading doctrines of Scripture, few in number, manifold in amplification. It is the art of combination; of associating things scattered abroad in Scripture, but which really may be systematized in the practice of teaching. Sometimes this will be done by way of illustration, or amplification, or inference, or confirmation; and we may see that this is the thread of Horsley's argument last quoted by way of confirmation. We here see how one thing hangs upon another: for instance, how many truths hang upon the fall of man, how many on the recovery. We see the regular connexion of cause and effect, of designs and accomplishments, and a thousand other things of great importance in discussion.—See *James Douglas, Esq. on Errors in Religion*, p. 303, 304, &c.

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# LECTURE XXX.

## OF EXORDIUMS, PERORATIONS, &c.

### OF EXORDIUMS.

You will recollect that I stated (p. 68, vol. i.) that there were commonly reckoned five parts of a Sermon, viz., The *exordium*, the *connexion*, the *division*, the *discussion*, and the *peroration*. I have yet said nothing of the exordium except naming it, because, though the first upon the paper, it should generally be the last in composition, for reasons hereafter to be given.

*The design* of the *exordium* is to introduce the subject to the minds of the auditory: it should insensibly conduct them to the points to be discussed, fix their attention, and interest their feelings; but nothing should be introduced here which would have a fitter and necessary place in the discussion.*

1. The exordium should be *short*.
2. It should be *clear*, and easy to be understood.
3. It should be *cool* and *grave*. This is not the oratorical department of a sermon, remembering that your auditors

* There has been very strong debate among sermonizers, whether this part should be omitted or used. I am of the latter opinion. If any wish to see the arguments, they are to be found in Simeon's Claude.

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are neither yet in heaven, nor in the air, nor at all elevated in their way thither; but upon earth, and in a place of worship.

4. An exordium, however, ought not to be so cool and grave as not to be at the same time *engaging* and *agreeable*. There are three principal ends which a preacher should propose, namely, to instruct, to please, and to affect;* but of these three, that which should reign in an exordium is, to please. I own, you should also aim to instruct and affect; but less to instruct than to please, and less still to affect than to instruct. Indeed, if you can judiciously and properly introduce any thing tender into exordium (especially on extraordinary occasions) you may to good purpose; but, be that as it may, the agreeable should reign in this part. You easily see by this, that you must banish from the exordium all ill-natured censures, terrible threatenings, bitter reproaches, and, in general, all that savours of anger, contempt, hatred, or indifference, and, in short, every thing that has the air of quarrelling with the hearers. Their attention must not only be excited (you may sufficiently do so by censures and reproaches), but you must softly insinuate yourself into their esteem, so that they may not only not oppose what you say, but be well satisfied you are an honest and well-meaning man.†

5. The whole of the exordium must be naturally connected with all the matter of the text. I say first the *whole* of the *exordium*; for great care must be taken to put no thing there foreign to your subject: therefore the best ex-

* See Blair's Lectures.

† *Satisfy your hearers that you are a well-meaning man.* Hence Quintilian so much insists on his orator's being a *good* man. The whole first chapter of his twelfth book is spent in proving the necessity of this; and if this be so needful at the bar, how much more so is it in the pulpit! His conclusion is enough to make a Christian minister blush. *Men had better be born dumb, and even destitute of reason, than pervert those gifts of Providence to pernicious purposes.* Mutos enim nasci, et egere omni ratione satius fuisset, quam Providentiæ munera in mutuam perniciem convertere."—*Quint.*, lib. xii., cap. i.

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ordiums are those which are composed of two propositions, the first of which is naturally and immediately connected with the second, and the second naturally and immediately with the text. Each of these propositions may be either proved or amplified; but the last must always conduct you with ease to the subject in question, nor must the first be very distant. According to this maxim, all exordiums must be condemned which, instead of leading you into the text, make you, as it were, tumble from a precipice into it, which is intolerable. Those also are to be condemned which conduct to the text by many long circuits, that is, by many propositions chained together, which is certainly vicious, and can only fatigue the hearer. I add, in the second place, the exordium must be connected with the *whole* matter of the *text*. It ought not merely to relate to one of its parts (or to one view only, if you intend to consider it in different views), but to all. One of the principal uses of an exordium is to prepare the mind of the hearer for the matter to be discussed. If, therefore, the exordium refer only to one of its parts, or to one view only, it will prepare the mind of the hearer for that one part, for that one view only, and not for the rest.

6. An exordium *must be simple*. We would not entirely banish figures; on the contrary, we would always employ such as may render the discourse pleasant and agreeable; but pompous and magnificent expressions must be avoided, as far as the things spoken will permit. Do not use a style too elevated, bordering on bombast—nor periods too harmonious—nor overstrained allegories—nor even metaphors too common or too bold; for indeed the hearer's mind, yet cool and in its natural state, can bear nothing of this kind.

7. An exordium must *not be common*. As this is a rule much abused, it will be needful to explain it. By a common exordium, I do not mean an exordium which will suit many texts; for if the texts are parallel, and the subject

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be managed with the same views, and in the same circumstances, what occasion is there to compose different exordiums? By a common exordium, I mean, in the first place, one taken from trivial things, and which have been said over and over again; these the people already know, and your labour will be infallibly thrown away. Such are exordiums taken from comparisons of the sun—of kings—of conquerors—of the ancient Romans, &c.—or from some histories of the Old Testament which have been often repeated—or of some well-known types, as the Israelites' passage through the Red Sea—and many more of the same kind. In the second place, I mean, by a common or general exordium, one which may be alike applied to two texts of different matter, or to two contrary interpretations of the same text. It is in this sense that common exordiums are vicious and distasteful.

8. Even in metaphorical or figurative texts it is quite puerile to make an exordium join the text by a metaphor; for, whatever ingenuity there may seem to be in it, it is certain there is no taste, no judgment, discovered in the practice; and, however it may pass in college declamations, it would appear too trifling in the pulpit. The exordium, then, must be connected with the text by the matter itself, that is, not by the figure, but by the *subject* intended to be conveyed by the figure. I would not, however, forbid the joining of the exordium to the text sometimes by the figure, provided it be done in a chaste and prudent manner.

Let us give one example. "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life;" John vi. 54. An exordium to a sermon from this text may be taken from the idea which Holy Scripture teaches us to form of our conversion, as if it were a *new birth*, which begins a new life —that, for this purpose, it speaks of a new *man*, a new *heaven* which illuminates, and a new *earth* which supports, him—that, attributing to this new man the same *senses* which nature has formed in us, as sight, hearing, feeling,

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smelling, tasting, it attributes also to him *objects* proportioned to each of these mystical senses like those which our senses produce by their natural operations. It tells us that our *eyes* contemplate the celestial *light*, which illuminates and guides us in the ways of righteousness—that our *ears* hear the *voice* of God, who calls us, and who, by these means, makes us obey our vocation. It tells us that the gospel is a *savour* of life, which communicates salvation to us. And, finally, it attributes to us a *mouth*, to eat the *flesh* and drink the *blood* of the Son of God, in order to nourish us to life eternal. It is this last expression which Jesus Christ has made use of in the sixth of John, and which says in my text, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life."

This exordium joins itself to the text by the figure made use of in the text, but in such a manner as not to be chargeable with affectation or witticism; for it is by a serious reflection on the *Scripture use* of the figure, acknowledging it to be a figure, and *preparing* the hearer to attend to the explication.

To these rules I subjoin a word or two on the *vices* of exordiums. 1. There are some preachers who imagine it a fine thing to take exordiums from the persons of their hearers, or the circumstances of times, places, general affairs, or news of the world; but I believe this is altogether a vicious method, and should never be used but on extraordinary occasions. First, there is too much *affectation* in it. Is it not a vain parade to begin a discourse with things which have no relation to the matter? It is certainly contrary to the chastity and modesty of a Christian pulpit. Secondly, exordiums of this sort are usually pulled in by head and shoulders. How should it be otherwise, when the articles of which they are composed have, if any, only a very distant relation to the text? By such means you defeat the principal design of an exordium, which is to prepare the hearers' minds, and to conduct them insensibly to the sub-

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ject. And finally, it is very difficult in such exordiums to avoid saying impertinencies; for what, in a public discourse, can be more indelicate, than to speak of yourself, or hearers, or times, or news? In my opinion, such exordiums ought to be entirely rejected.

2. You must also, for the most part, reject exordiums taken from profane history, or what they call the apothegms of illustrious men. This method savours too much of the college, and is by no means in the taste of pious, well-bred men. Alexander, Cæsar, Pompey, all the great names of antiquity, have no business to ascend the pulpit; and if they are not suffered now-a-days, either in orations in the senate, or in pleas of the bar, much less ought they to be allowed in Christian sermons. It may not be amiss if they appear now and then in the discussion, or in the application; but even there we ought to see them but seldom, not oftener than once a year at most: but to introduce them at the beginning of a sermon is intolerable. I say much the same of citations from profane authors; they must be forborne, unless it be something so particular, so agreeable, and so apt to the text, as to carry its own recommendation along with it. Of this kind, I think, was the exordium of a sermon on Ps. xc. 12: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." It was taken from Plutarch, who relates that Alcibiades called one day to see Pericles, and was told by his domestics that their master was busy in preparing his accounts to lay before the Republic: to which he immediately replied, "Instead of labouring to make up his accounts, it would be incomparably better to render himself not accountable to them at all." It was added, that this is the notion of almost all wicked men, who, being ignorant of God their governor, and feeling their consciences charged with a thousand crimes, think only of eluding the judgment of God, and of avoiding that account which they will one day be obliged to give to the Master of all crea-

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tures—that if only one man, or two men, were in question, the attempt of Alcibiades might succeed; but as it was God with whom they had to do, it must be worse than foolish to imagine his tribunal could be avoided—that there was no other way to take, than to prepare to give an account to God: nor any advice more reasonable, than to labour continually to do it well—and that, for this purpose, even self-interest should oblige us to have recourse to God to assist us by his grace—this is what the church aims to teach us in the words of the prophet, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

In general, the best exordiums are taken from *theology;* for as, on the one hand, they have always more relation to the matter of the text, so, on the other, they much better prepare the hearers' minds, being more grave, and free from the puerile pedantries of the college.

In order to compose an exordium, after you have well considered the senses of the text, and observed what are the principal matters which ought to enter into the discussion, and after you have made the division, endeavour to reduce the whole to one common idea, and then choose some other idea naturally connected with that common idea, either immediately, or by means of another. If it be immediately connected with the subject, endeavour to reduce it to one proposition, which may be cleared and proved as you go on; or if it have parts, which require separate explications and proofs, it must be managed so as to include them; and, finally, by the natural connexion of that proposition with the discussion, enter into the text. If the proposition be connected with the text only remotely, then establish the first, pass on to the second, and so proceed from the second to the text.*

* *Connect the parts of the exordium with the subject of the discourse.* "Quoties autem procœmio fuerimus usi, tum sive ad expositionem transibimus, sive protinus ad probationem, id debebit in principio postremum esse, cui commodissime jungi initium sequentium poterit. Ut non abrupte cadere in narrationem, ita non obscure transcendere est opti-

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Exordiums may be taken from almost all the same topics as observations, that is, from *genus, species, contraries*, &c. For there are but few good exordiums which might not go into the discussion, under the title of general observations. Of such observations, that must be chosen for an exordium which is least essential or least necessary to the discussion, and which, besides, is clear, agreeable, and entertaining. A *comparison* may sometimes be employed in an exordium, but not often; nor must trivial comparisons be used which all the world know, or which are taken from any thing mean; nor must they be embarrassing, taken from things unknown to the people, as those are which are borrowed from mechanics, astronomy, &c., of which the people know nothing at all.

*Bible-history* may be used, but sparingly; and the application must be always just, agreeable, and, in some sort, new and remarkable.

*Types* may also be employed, but with the same precautions, always consulting good sense and taste.

The best method is, to compose several *exordiums for the same text*, by taking it in all its different relations; for by such means you may choose the most proper. But after all these general precepts, which indeed ought to be known, and by which exordiums must be regulated, it is certain *the invention and composition of an exordium can only become easy by practice.* A young preacher ought not to complain of trouble, nor to be any way negligent in the matter; for he may be sure of succeeding by attention and application.

To the text of Claude I should add, that exordiums are frequently so constructed as to appear mere excrescences, having little or no connexion with the following part of the

mum. Si vero longior sequetur, ac perplexa magis expositio, ad eam ipsam præparandus judex erit: ut *Cicero* sæpius, sed hoc præcipue loco fecit: *Paulo longius exordium rei demonstrandæ petam; quod quæso, judices, ne moleste patiamini. Principiis enim cognitis, multo facilius extrema intelligetis.*"—Pro Cluent. Quint. Inst., lib. iv., de Exordio.

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sermon, and so far from forming any part of the subject discussed, that they would serve equally well for many different *kinds* of texts or subjects. It will be useful to compare your exordium with the running title of the sermon; and if, instead of recognizing each other, they appear perfect strangers, as is too often the case, you may be sure that you have entered upon a wrong track of thought, and must endeavour to rectify the error.

While, however, it is necessary that your exordium should agree with the text, participating in its very spirit as well as in the sentiment, and forming a constituent part of the subject, you must at the same time avoid anticipating what belongs to the discussion as before observed; for in this case you would either be forced to employ repetition or weaken your argument. On this account it is generally advisable to form the sermon entirely before you think of an exordium; then the whole matter lies before you; you not only see the character and spirit of your subject, but also what remaining idea will lead to the whole. But there is an exception to this rule; for if the preacher designs to form a narrative, historical, or contextual exordium, he may certainly form this in the first instance. Where a text supplies three or four divisions, the first of which is a character, &c., one means of preserving simplicity is to throw such part altogether into the exordium.

The examples now to be produced will however give clearer views of this department of a sermon than any rules whatever, and these examples may be arranged into four classes—the narrative, the explicatory, the propositional, and the observational. I commence with those of the narrative kind, because they are the most simple, and, where they can be employed with propriety, are generally most interesting.

No. 1.—An example of the narrative introduction is from Jay's Sermons, vol. ii., p. 252; on Ezek. xxix. 17—20, but in too curtailed a form; yet the general design is

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hinted at, namely, that the circumstances of the history are narrated or recited in a brief manner, so as to render the discussion intelligible as to the text. Thus, if you ask the question, What was the occasion of the words of the text? the answer is to be derived and narrated from the history then under consideration. "Tyre was the great emporium of trade and navigation of that age. Tyre became rich, luxurious, proud, and impious. Nebuchadrezzar was the instrument in God's hand to destroy, or at least to subdue, the people; no doubt in mercy, that in their affliction they might seek the Lord. These Tyreans made such a stout resistance that it was thirteen years before Nebuchadrezzar could make a breach in the walls, and, when entry was effected, the besiegers found an empty city; for the Tyreans, having had command of the sea, transported all their treasures to a neighbouring station. These circumstances introduce the words of the text. As Nebuchadrezzar had such hard service for no advantage, God here in the text promised him a rich and easy conquest of Egypt." The discourse which follows consists of valuable observations, and this introduction is most appropriate to such design. Now it must be very evident that no other kind of exordium could have suited the occasion, and herein lies the skill of the preacher. When the introduction suits the subject, and the subject the introduction, they give mutual aid and beauty to each other. I have one thing more to observe with regard to the past example. The sermon is not merely introduced by the narrative, but the narrative is introduced by a remark with some illustration,* both of which are appropriate. The remark is this, that "when God designs a work, he has frequently condescended to intimate it to his choice servants," Amos iii. 7. The author then instances the Lord's discoveries to Ezekiel respecting Tyre, and thus the connexion of thought is sup-

* Robinson seems to coin a new word for such remarks, and calls them *præexordia*.

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ported; and the same course is taken in the following example:

No. 2.—Blair, on the power of conscience, Gen. xlii. 21, 22: "And they said one to another, We are guilty," &c. The sermon itself, like Jay's, is treated by way of observation. The following is the substance of its narrative introduction. The *previous remark* is on the interesting simplicity of the patriarchal age.

The book of Genesis displays a more singular and interesting scene than was ever presented to the world by any other historical record. It carries us back to the beginning of time, and exhibits mankind in their infant and rising state. It shows us human manners in their primitive simplicity, before the arts of refinement had polished the behaviour or disguised the characters of men; when they gave vent to their passions without dissimulation, and spoke their sentiments without reserve. Few great societies were, as yet, formed on the earth. Men lived in scattered tribes. The transactions of families made the chief materials of history; and they are related, in this book, with that beautiful simplicity which in the highest degree both delights the imagination and affects the heart.

This leads to the *narrative.*

Of all the patriarchal histories, that of Joseph and his brethren is the most remarkable, for the characters of the actors, the instructive nature of the events, and the surprising revolutions of worldly fortune. As far as relates to the text, and is necessary for explaining it, the story is to the following purpose:——Joseph, the youngest except one of the sons of Jacob, was distinguished by his father with such marks of peculiar affection as excited the envy of his brethren. Having related to them, in the openness of his heart, certain dreams which portended his future advancement above them, their jealousy rose to such a height that they unnaturally conspired his destruction. Seizing the opportunity of his being at a distance from home, they

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first threw him into a pit, and afterwards sold him for a slave, imposing on their father by a false relation of his death. When they had thus gratified their resentment, they lost all remembrance of their crime. The family of Jacob was rich and powerful; and several years passed away, during which they lived in prosperity, without being touched, as far as appears, with the least remorse for the cruel deed which they had committed. Meanwhile, Joseph was safely conducted by the hand of Providence through a variety of dangers, until, from the lowest condition, he rose at last to be chief favourite of the king of Egypt, the most powerful monarch at that time in the world. While he possessed this high dignity, a general famine distressed all the neighbouring countries. In Egypt alone, by means of his foresight and prudent administration, plenty still reigned. Compelled to have recourse to that kingdom for supply of food, the brethren of Joseph, upon this occasion, appeared in his presence, and made their humble application to him for liberty to purchase corn; little suspecting the governor of the land, before whom they *bowed down their faces to the earth*, to be him whom long ago they had sold as a slave to the Ishmaelites. But Joseph no sooner saw than he knew his brethren; and at this unexpected meeting, his heart melted within him. Fraternal tenderness arose in all its warmth, and totally effaced from his generous breast the impression of their former cruelty. Though, from that moment, he began to prepare for them a surprise of joy, yet he so far restrained himself as to assume an appearance of great severity. By this he intended both to oblige them to bring into Egypt his youngest and most beloved brother, whose presence he instantly required, and also to awaken within them a due sense of the crimes which they had formerly perpetrated. Accordingly his behaviour produced the designed effect. For while they were in this situation, strangers in a foreign land, where they had fallen, as they conceived, into ex-



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treme distress—where they were thrown into prison by the governor, and treated with rigour for which they could assign no cause, the reflection mentioned in the text arose in their minds. Conscience brought to remembrance their former sins. It recalled, in particular, their long-forgotten cruelty to Joseph; and, without hesitation, they interpreted their present distress to be a judgment, for this crime, inflicted by heaven. They said one to another, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.—Behold, also his blood is required."

This exordium prepares the way for his observations, which are,

I. That a sense of right and wrong in conduct, or of moral good and evil, belongs to human nature.

II. That it produces an apprehension of merited punishment when we have committed evil.

III. That although this inward sentiment be stifled during the season of prosperity, yet in adversity it will revive.

IV. That when it revives it determines us to consider every distress which we suffer, from what cause soever it has arisen, as an actual infliction of punishment from God.

No. 3.—The same author, on 2 Kings viii. 12, 13: "And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do," &c.

In the days of Joram, king of Israel, flourished the prophet Elisha. His character was so eminent, and his fame so widely spread, that Benhadad, the king of Syria, though an idolater, sent to consult him concerning the issue of a distemper which threatened his life. The messenger employed on this occasion was Hazael, who appears to have been one of the princes, or chief men, of the Syrian court. Charged with rich gifts from the king, he presented himself before the prophet, and accosted him in terms of the highest respect. During the conference which they held

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together, Elisha fixed his eye stedfastly on the countenance of Hazael, and discerning, by a prophetic spirit, his future tyranny and cruelty, he could not contain himself from bursting into a flood of tears. When Hazael, in surprise, inquired into the cause of this sudden emotion, the prophet plainly informs him of the crimes and barbarities which he foresaw that hereafter he should commit. The soul of Hazael abhorred, at this time, the thoughts of cruelty. Uncorrupted, as yet, by ambition or greatness, his indignation arose at being thought capable of such savage actions as the prophet had mentioned; and, with much warmth, he replies, "But, what! is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?" Elisha makes no return but to point out a remarkable change which was to take place in his condition: "The Lord hath showed me that thou shalt be king over Syria." In the course of time all that had been predicted came to pass. Hazael ascended the throne; and ambition took possession of his heart. "He smote the children of Israel in all their coasts. He oppressed them during all the days of king Jehoahaz" (2 Kings xiii. 32); and, from what is left on record of his actions, he plainly appears to have proved, what the prophet foresaw him to be, a man of violence, cruelty, and blood.

In this passage of history an object is presented which deserves our serious attention. We behold a man who, in one state of life, could not look upon certain crimes without surprise and horror; who knew so little of himself as to believe it impossible for him ever to be concerned in committing them; that same man, by a change of condition, transformed in all his sentiments, and, as he rose in greatness, rising also in guilt, till at last he completed that whole character of iniquity which he once detested. Hence the following observations naturally arise:—I. That to a mind not entirely corrupted, sentiments of abhorrence at guilt are natural. II. That, notwithstanding those sentiments, the mind may be brought under the dominion of the



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vices which it had most abhorred. III. That this unhappy revolution is frequently owing to a change of men's external circumstances and condition in the world.

These exordiums I cannot but consider as excellent specimens of the power of refined description. The late Dr. Hunter, in his Scripture Biography, very ably adopts this style, and a numerous train of followers have graced the march of Blair and Hunter; but I owe it to the Scriptures to declare that in general the simple language of Scripture is far more striking than that of these descriptionists: the story of Joseph and his brethren, in particular, is related by Moses in a manner which quite excels Dr. Blair; yet I wish young preachers to exercise themselves in such exordiums, only giving a hint to the people that they ought to read in the Scriptures the account which they give in other language.

No. 4.—Beddome also furnishes an exordium of this class; but that part of the narrative which he recites appears only brought forward in order to mark the analogy between the journeyings of the Israelites and the spiritual experience of the Christian. His text is Exod. xiii. 21: "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud," &c.

God, having brought the children of Israel out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm, did not leave them to find the way to Canaan by their own wisdom, or encounter the various difficulties of the way in their own strength. He himself set out with them on their journey, and conducted them to the end of it. Their first stage was to Rameses, on the other side of the Red Sea, which signifies brokenness, and may not unfitly represent the state of a sinner's heart in the commencement of his religious course. The second stage was Succoth, which may be rendered tents, denoting the unsettled state of God's people in the present world. They are strangers and sojourners, and acknowledge themselves to be so as soon as they turn their

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faces Zion-wards. Their next stage was to Etham, a word that signifies prowess or strength; so that the way to Etham is through Rameses and Succoth, not forgetting the passage of the Red Sea.

Hitherto the Israelites were the special care of Providence. The Lord alone did lead them, and there was no strange god with him. How he continued to perform this kind and necessary office, we are informed in the words of our text: "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light, to go by day and night."

He then offers a few general remarks upon the text by way of explanation; and secondly, considers the symbolical meaning of the fiery pillar in the wilderness, and its application to our present circumstances.

What I have denominated the EXPOSITORY exordium is very properly prefixed to propositional and all other discourses which are not treated textually. Nothing is more necessary than to show the true meaning of a text before you attempt to establish either doctrines or observations upon it: because the justness of your reasonings or remarks may otherwise appear doubtful. Frequently, indeed, even when the greater part of the sermon is to be occupied in *establishing* some truth, your exposition must occupy one division; but, when this is not required, it must find a place in the exordium. The following examples will sufficiently show the propriety of this course:

No. 1.—Beddome, on Col. i. 27: "Christ in you the hope of glory."

Glory is the greatest word in our language; and "the God of glory" is one of the most magnificent titles given to the Supreme Being in the sacred Scriptures. No word is so sweet, so full and comprehensive. Glory is the object of all true believers. The hope of it is wrought in them by the Holy Spirit, and they are begotten to it by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Whatever else they

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relinquish, they will not part with this; they live in hope, and die in hope. It is this which stimulates to action, and supports them under their various afflictions.

Christ dwells in all true believers as a principle of spiritual life and action. The second Adam is a quickening spirit, giving life wherever his presence is enjoyed; and, as the body without the soul is dead, so the soul without Christ is dead also. All our spiritual performances, and all our capacity for what is good, are from him; and without a vital and intimate union with him, we can do nothing. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" John xv. 5; 2 Cor. xiii. 5. The union between Christ and believers is not indeed essential, like that which subsists between the sacred Three, though with that it is in some respects compared, John xvii. 21. Nor is it a personal union, like that between the divine and human nature of our Lord. Nor yet merely an operative or influential union, like that between God and all his creatures; "for in him we live and move and have our being." It is a mystical and spiritual union, a union of affection, interest, and design. It is also mutual and reciprocal; he dwells in us, and we dwell in him; he sups with us, and we with him; and because he lives, we shall live also: John xiv. 23; Gal. ii. 20; Rev. iii. 20.

No. 2.—A similar introduction is furnished by the same author, on Acts xi. 23: "Who, when he was come, and had seen the grace of God, was glad," &c. The discourse is strictly observational.

By the "grace of God" in Scripture is generally meant his favour to the unworthy, in opposition to merit and desert. It supposes that God is under no constraint in exercising mercy, and that man has no claims upon him. It is the only source of all the great blessings we enjoy in this world, and of all the blessings we shall enjoy in the next. This grace is displayed in our regeneration, sanctification, and preservation; and, when its subjects are

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completely glorified, grace will be fully satisfied. Faith is necessary to salvation, but does not lessen its freeness; for that also is matter of free favour, as Eph. ii. 8, 9.

Again: grace is sometimes put for the effect of God's free favour towards us, and is so to be understood in our text. Considering it as the original source of our salvation, it is grace in the fountain; in its operations it is grace in the stream: or say grace in the principle, and in the product. In both respects it is absolutely free, without money and without price. It prevents our deserts and endeavours, and far exceeds our highest hopes. It is evident that where this grace is it will be *seen*, and that the appearance of it in others is matter of joy to Christians, and especially to faithful ministers.

No. 3.—Walker, vol. ii., p. 199, on 2 Cor. viii. 9: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c.

These words contain an accurate description of the grace or free favour of our Lord Jesus Christ, which all true believers are said to know, *i. e.*, they have not only heard the report of this grace, assented to the truth of the report, and are able to give some account of it to others; but they know it experimentally, have tasted its sweetness, and felt its power on their own hearts.

No. 4.—Blair, on Ps. lxxvi. 10: "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

This psalm is generally supposed to have been written in the reign of Hezekiah, and to refer to the formidable invasion of Judea by Sennacherib, when the angel of the Lord, in one night, discomfited the whole Assyrian host, and smote them with sudden destruction. To this interposition of the divine arm the context may naturally be applied. In the text we have the wise and religious reflection of the psalmist upon the violent designs which had been carried on by the enemies of his country, and upon the issue to which Providence brought them: "Surely the wrath of

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man shall praise thee." By "the wrath of man" we are to understand all that the impetuosity of human passion can devise or execute; the projects of ambition and resentment; the rage of persecution; the fury of war; the disorders which violence produces in private life, and the public commotions which it excites in the world: all these shall praise God, not with their intention and design, nor by their native tendency; but by those wise and good purposes which his providence makes them accomplish; from their poison extracting health, and converting things which in themselves are pernicious, into instruments of his glory and of public benefit; so that, though "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," it is nevertheless forced and compelled to minister to his praise. The psalmist adds, "The remainder of wrath thou shalt restrain;" that is, God will allow scope to the wrath of man so far as it answers his good purposes, and is subservient to his praise; the rest of it shall be curbed and bound up. When it would attempt to go beyond its prescribed limit, he says to it, as to the waters of the ocean, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

All this shall be fully verified and declared by the last issue of things; when we shall be able more clearly to trace the divine administration through its several steps, by seeing the consummation of the whole. In some cases it may be reserved for this period to unfold the mysterious wisdom of heaven. But, in general, as much of the divine conduct is at present manifest as gives us just ground for the assertion in the text. In the sequel of this discourse I shall endeavour to illustrate and confirm it. I shall show in what manner the wrath of man is made to praise the power, the wisdom, the justice, and the goodness of God.

It may here be observed that the expository exordium is generally introduced by an appropriate but brief remark,

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in a similar manner to that of the narrative kind. The following is a very beautiful example of exposition thus introduced:—

No. 5.—Simeon's Horæ Hom., vol. v., p. 273, on Isaiah xiv. 32: "What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the Lord hath founded Zion," &c.

*Previous Remark.*

God is for the most part overlooked in the government of the world; and hence arise an over-confidence among some, and an undue timidity amongst others. But if we viewed God as ordering and over-ruling every thing, even to the falling of a sparrow, we should undertake nothing ourselves without a direct reference to him, nor fear what was undertaken by others whilst we had him for our protector. This is the great lesson which we are taught in the text.

Then follows the *exposition.*

The context contains a prophecy respecting the fate of Palestine. The Philistines had been invaded and conquered by king Uzziah, 2 Chron. xxvi. 6; but in the days of Ahaz, Uzziah's son, they had regained their cities, and made reprisals on the provinces of the Jewish monarch: 2 Chron. xxviii. 18. At the accession of Hezekiah to the throne of Judah they hoped to make yet further inroads on the Jewish territory; and the prophet Isaiah was inspired to foretel that they should not only fail in their attempts, but be utterly vanquished by him whom they so fondly thought to subdue and subjugate. Read the passage in this view, and the whole address will appear extremely spirited and beautiful. "Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken," *i. e.*, because thou hast triumphed over Uzziah's son; "for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, or adder; and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent." Uzziah bit thee only as a common serpent; but his grandson Heze-



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kiah shall inflict a wound as fatal as an adder: and prove as irresistible as a fiery flying serpent. "And the first-born of the poor [Jews, whom thou hast so oppressed] shall feed, and the needy [whom thou hast so terrified] shall lie down in safety; whilst thy root shall be destroyed by famine, and thy remnant with the sword." Instead then of rejoicing, "Howl, O gate; cry, O city; thou whole Palestina art dissolved; for there shall come from the north [Judea] a smoke [and dust of an army in full march]; and none shall be alone [or decline serving in this army] at the appointed time." In the mean time "what shall one then answer the messengers of the nation," * when they come, full of alarm and terror, announcing thy preparations to invade the land of Judah? Answer, "That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it;" and that no weapon ever formed against them shall prosper.

The words, thus explained, we shall consider as proclaiming,

I. An unquestionable fact;—"God has founded Zion."

II. An instructive lesson;—It teaches us that our trust must be on God alone, and that confidence in him shall never be disappointed.

III. A consoling truth;—"The poor of his people shall trust in it."

No. 6.—Beddome, in the introduction to his sermon on Ps. cxix. 129: "Thy testimonies are wonderful"—after a very suitable remark in the style of comment, explains and enlarges upon the word "testimonies."

*Previous Remark.*

It is amazing with what energy and variety of expression David in this psalm sets forth his love to God's holy word; and it is in consequence of the closest inspection of

* The general interpretation, of their being *foreign ambassadors sent to congratulate* Hezekiah, enervates the whole force of the passage, and is in opposition to the text itself, which speaks of them as the messengers of *the nation*, and not of foreign nations.

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its contents, and the most intimate acquaintance with its properties, that he declares it to be truly wonderful. Other writings may have their excellences, and be entitled to high regard; but no human productions can compare with the records of eternal truth. These are dictated by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and written with the finger of the living God.

*Exposition.*

The word "testimony," in the singular, is generally put for the whole of the inspired writings, as in Ps. xix. 7: "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." The Scripture is a divine testimony, given by inspiration of God; and holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost: 2 Tim. iii. 16. It is a testimony concerning God, his perfections and operations, the way in which he is to be worshipped, and the method of salvation which his infinite wisdom hath devised. Though it is not silent on the mysteries of nature and of providence, yet its principal object is to make known the counsels of divine grace. It is a testimony from God to man; it teaches what could not otherwise have been known, and places in a much clearer light what might possibly have been discovered by other means.

The New Testament is especially called the testimony of our Lord and Saviour: 2 Tim. i. 8. In it the Father bears witness to Christ, and Christ bears witness of him. It is the record which God hath given of his Son, and of that eternal life which he hath given to us in him.

By "testimonies," in the plural number, we are commonly to understand the precepts of the moral law: Deut. iv. 45; vi. 17. Hence the ark, in which the two tables of the law were deposited, was called the ark of the testimony: Exod. xxx. 6. God, in giving the law to the children of Israel, testified his peculiar favour towards them; and, in continuing his word amongst us, he still testifies

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his loving-kindness towards us. His holy law is an infallible rule to judge and walk by, an unerring standard to which all our sentiments and actions must be reduced; what it does not require cannot be a duty, what it forbids cannot but be a sin. It is called "a sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed, as to a light that shineth in a dark place:" 2 Pet. i. 19. David also considered it as a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path: Ps. cxix. 105. It is to the believer like the pillar of cloud and fire, which went before the Israelites in the wilderness, directing their marches and encampments.

No. 7.—The same author, vol. vii., p. 14, on 2 Cor. xi. 2: "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy."

*Previous remark.*

Pious and faithful ministers have much at heart the true interest of their people. Paul therefore, well knowing the state of the Corinthian church, expresses the most painful apprehensions on their account; he is "jealous over them with godly jealousy."

*Exposition.*

The term jealousy is sometimes expressive of wrath and indignation, and in this sense it is ascribed to the Supreme Being. God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies: Exod. xx. 5; Nah. i. 2; 1 Cor. x. 22. The term is more frequently applied to those suspicions which arise out of the conjugal state, which, though they may have their origin in the extravagance of love, often produce the same effects as mortal hatred. Jealousy in this respect is cruel as the grave: Numb. v. 14, 29; Cant. viii. 6.

In the passage under consideration the word is expressive of a tender and anxious concern for the welfare of

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others, attended with some doubtfulness concerning them, including a mixture of hope and fear. Thus Job was jealous over his children, lest they had sinned against God, chap. i. 5. Professors of religion ought in this way to be jealous over themselves, and over one another; for it is no breach of charity to suspect ill when we intend well. The greater our love to others, the more anxious will be our care concerning them, lest they should be mistaken now, and should miscarry at last. Evil surmisings are highly culpable, but godly jealousies are commendable. "I fear," says the apostle in another place, "lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain:" Gal. iv. 11.

Our author then proceeds to consider,

I. The grounds and reasons of the apostle's jealousy.

II. The peculiar properties of it:—"godly jealousy."

We now come to the ARGUMENTATIVE exordium. Sometimes it may be proper to enter somewhat at large into the proof of one or more propositions closely connected with the doctrine of the text, in order to the more full and luminous elucidation of the text itself, particularly where such doctrines have been strongly opposed, and where the passage under consideration has been wrested from its proper meaning to serve the purposes of a party.

Some examples of this kind will be given in the Topical Exordiums, particularly under the twenty-second Topic. The following will therefore be sufficient in this place:—

No. 1.—Simeon's Appendix to Horæ Hom., vol. iv., p. 49, on Matt. xii. 36, 37: "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof," &c.

There is not any plainer or more acknowledged truth, in relation to natural things, than that "a tree is known by its fruit." In morals the same would be equally obvious, if we were equally unbiassed in our judgment respecting it. But if we speak of morals, we must not confine our

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attention to actions only: we must take also the words of men into the account; since by them the heart betrays itself no less than by overt acts. The communications which proceed from the heart will, of necessity, correspond with the treasures which abound in it; even as a stream will manifest the quality of the fountain from which it flows. Our blessed Lord has determined this point; and grounded on it a most solemn declaration that is of the utmost importance to every child of man. "A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

I. Explain this declaration.

II. Point out the proper use to be made of it.

No. 2.—The same author, on Matt. xxvi. 24: "It had been good for that man if he had not been born."

"Known unto God are all his works from the foundation of the world." But the fore-ordination of God does not in any degree affect the responsibility of man. Man is altogether a free agent in every thing that he does, whether it be good or evil. The Spirit of God may move him, or Satan may tempt him; but he does nothing without the concurrence of his own will. Hence, when Peter tells the Jews that our blessed Lord was "delivered up to death by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," he still fixed the guilt of his death on them; saying, "Him ye have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain:" Acts ii. 23. So, in the passage before us, our blessed Lord speaks to the same effect. It had been written of him, "Mine own familiar friend, whom I trusted, who did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me:" compare ver. 23 with Ps. xli. 9. And, in reference to this prediction, our Lord says, "The Son of

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man goeth as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born."

Observational exordiums, or those which contain some general remark with its illustration, are by far the most numerous. Such remark may be theological or critical, historical or philosophical, practical or experimental; in short, of any kind whatever that suits the purpose of the preacher, and is sufficiently connected with the subject to be brought forward in the discussion. Even when the context requires to be noticed, which indeed was the general practice of our old writers, and also when the design of the preacher leads him to adopt an expository exordium, an introductory remark may, as we have seen, be employed with advantage. But in other cases the remark may be fully brought out and illustrated. Such remarks should of course be sensible and judicious, and admit of an easy application to the text; and the preacher must be careful not to use the same remark too frequently: I have observed this fault even in Blair.

Two or three examples of a general character shall close this Lecture.

No. 1.—Blair, on 1 Cor. xiii. 5: "Charity thinketh no evil."

*Remark.*

Religion and government are the two great foundations of order and comfort among mankind.

*Illustration.*

Government restrains the outrages and crimes which would be subversive of society, secures the property and defends the lives of its subjects. Human laws however can extend no further than to the actions of men. Though they protect us from external violence, they leave us open on different sides to be wounded. By the vices which prevail in society, our tranquillity may be disturbed, and our

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lives in various ways embittered, while government can give us no redress. Religion goes a step further, and strikes at the root of those disorders which occasion so much misery in the world. Its professed scope is to regulate, not actions alone, but the temper and inclinations. By this means it ascends to the sources of conduct; and very ineffectual would the wisest system of legislation prove for the happiness of mankind, if it did not derive aid from religion, in softening the dispositions of men, and checking many of those evil passions to which the influence of law cannot possibly reach.

Hence in the description which the apostle gives of charity, that great principle in the Christian system, he explains its operation, not by the actions to which it gives rise, but by the disposition which it produces in the heart. He justly supposes that, if the temper be duly regulated, propriety of action will follow, and good order take place in external behaviour. Of those characters of charity, I have chosen one for the subject of this discourse, which leads to the consideration of a virtue highly important to us, both as Christians and as members of society.

No. 2.—On Matt. xxvi. 47: "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

*Remark.*

The instructions of our Lord commonly arose out of circumstances, and these were managed with consummate wisdom.

*Illustration.*

At the time to which our text refers, he pointed out to his disciples that their present circumstances imperiously called upon them for watchfulness and prayer. As renewed persons they had no disinclination to this; nay, had a strong desire to be found in it: yet our Lord found them in a state of great inaptitude, even in compliance with his request or injunction, and at a time when they must have

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known that their Master was under some very uncommon trouble. The infirmities of the flesh prevailed against their better judgment, and they fell asleep; yet, instead of severe rebuke, the Saviour finds that kind and tender apology for them of which the words of our text consist, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

No. 3.—Atterbury, vol. i., p. 203, on Eccles. vii. 2: "It is better to go to the house of mourning," &c.

*Remark.*

The first step towards happiness is to correct our false opinions concerning it.

*Illustration.*

We shall thus learn to esteem every thing properly, that is, not according to that rate and value which the world, or our mistaken imaginations, may have placed upon it, but according to that which in itself, and in the account of right reason and Scripture, it really bears.

The preacher therefore has, in this chapter, laid together a set of religious paradoxes, which, however they startle us, or shock us upon the first hearing, yet, when closely examined, will appear to be clear and unquestionable truths, by which the whole of our lives ought to be regulated.

The author then names a few of those paradoxes, and thus makes a transition to the text.

No. 4.—Jay, on Ps. cxviii. 15: "The voice of rejoicing is in the tabernacle of the righteous."

Nothing can more usefully engage our attention than human nature and human life. The proper study of mankind is man. His origin and his end; the structure of his body, and the powers of his mind: his situation, and his connexions, are all capable of yielding us boundless and edifying instruction.

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In observing mankind, the private and familiar views of their character are by far the most curious, interesting, and profitable. The greater part of our history is composed of minute and common incidents, and little and ordinary things serve more to discover a man, and conduce more to render him useful, than splendid and rare occurrences. Abroad a man appears cautious; at home he is unreserved. Abroad he is artificial; at home he is real. Abroad he is useful; at home he is necessary: and of this we may rest assured, that a man is in truth what he is in his own family, whether vicious or virtuous, tyrannical or mild, miserable or happy.

My brethren, we are going to enter one of those houses of which David speaks—a tabernacle filled with the voice of rejoicing. Domestic felicity is our present subject.

These examples are in the true style of remark and illustration, and they very happily join with their respective texts. To such exordiums the commendation of Blair applies:—"It is a great beauty in an introduction when it can be made to turn on some thought fully brought out and illustrated, especially if that thought has a close connexion with the discourse following, and at the same time does not anticipate any thing that is afterwards to be introduced in a more proper place."

Besides the four kinds of exordium already noticed, I may also mention a fifth kind which is sometimes adopted, namely, the APPLICATORY. It may appear somewhat out of order to apply a subject before it is explained and illustrated, nevertheless, if used sparingly, it is admissible, and, if well managed, such exordiums are calculated to arouse the attention of the people, and prepare them for the remaining parts of the discourse. The following examples will sufficiently illustrate these remarks.

No. 1.—Simeon's Horæ Hom., vol. x., p. 299, on 1 Tim. i. 16: "I obtained mercy, &c."

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The first question that should occur to our minds is this, *Have* I obtained mercy? If a favourable answer can be returned to that, we should inquire in what manner, and for what ends, mercy has been shown us? There can be no doubt but that if persons who are converted to God would frequently look back upon the state in which they were previous to their conversion, they would find the retrospect attended with the most beneficial consequences. Their recollection would furnish them with innumerable facts which would tend to humble them in the dust, and to excite adoring thoughts of that grace which has so distinguished them. St. Paul appears to have taken peculiar pleasure in this exercise of mind, &c., from which we shall consider,

I. The circumstances under which he obtained mercy.

II. The ends for which mercy was granted him.

No. 2.—Jay, on 1 Kings xviii. 12: "I fear the Lord from my youth." After announcing his intention to exhibit Obadiah as an example for imitation, but before entering on the divisions of his discourse, our author thus proceeds in a way of direct address to young people:—

In your imitation of him many are concerned, though none are so deeply interested as yourselves. The preacher who addresses you is concerned. He longs "after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." Indeed, if ministers desire to be useful, they cannot be indifferent to you. You would prove their best helpers; you would rouse the careless; you would reproach those of riper years; you would decide the wavering young. It is in your power to build up our churches, and to change the moral face of our neighbourhood. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad" for you, "and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."

Behold, standing near your preacher, your friends, your relations, your parents, hearing for you with trembling, and prayers, and tears. Thy father is saying, "My son,

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if thou be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine." The woman who bare thee is saying, "What, my son, and what the son of my womb, and what the son of my vows?"

Behold too your fellow-citizens, your countrymen. I imagine all these assembled here this evening, with whom you are to have any future connexions by friendship, by alliance, by business; whose kindred you are to espouse, whose offices you are to fill—these I ask, Is it a matter of indifference whether the rising generation be infidel and immoral, or influenced by conscience and governed by Scripture? Where is the person who has any regard for the welfare of the nation, for social order, for relative life, for personal happiness, who would not immediately exclaim, "Rid me and deliver me from the hand of strange children; whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood: that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; and that our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace."

Behold the blessed God looking down from heaven, blending his claims with your welfare, and urging the language of command and of promise: "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth;" "they that seek me early shall find me."—These are parties concerned in the success of this endeavour. But, my young friends, there are characters here more deeply interested than all these—they are yourselves. To be pious in early years is to be "wise for yourselves:" it is your privilege, shall I say, more than your duty?—Yes, the gain will be principally your own. How shall I convince you of this? How shall I make you feel the importance of it? We shall take three views of the subject. We shall I. Consider youth as the most favourable season in which to commence a religious course. II. Show the beneficial influence of early piety over your future life. III. Examine, in this awful concern, the consequences of procrastination.

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From these examples it will be obvious that all the different parts of a discourse will admit of an interchange one with another. Exposition, for instance, commonly takes place in the body of the discourse, but, as we have seen, it may lead in the exordium. Many sermons are composed of observations; but observation also lends its assistance to introduce any subject treated textually; for in such surmons we want not exposition upon exposition, or very rarely. The body of a sermon is the most natural place for argument, and yet we see that sometimes this may be transferred into the exordium.

In fact, there are certain essential parts in every sermon (see vol. ii., p. 357); they admit a vast variety of interchange one with another; but each and every part must appear somewhere, and the interchanges here admitted will not offend the understanding of the hearer, provided the judgment of the preacher properly leads the way.

There is an exordium of a very extraordinary character of Masillon, given in English in the preface of vol. i. of the Pulpit, but for which I have no room.

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# LECTURE XXXI.

## TOPICAL EXORDIUMS, &c.

HAVING endeavoured, in the preceding Lecture, to illustrate the different *kinds* of exordium, it will now be my business to point out some of those *materials* of which the young preacher may properly avail himself in the construction of this part of his discourses. And here the first place will be given to examples formed on Claude's Topics, in order to show their applicability to this particular service; and after presenting these in their order, I shall add a few supplementary Topics which appear to be peculiarly suited to exordiums. It may be proper to observe that these Topics may furnish the chief materials, whatever *kind* of exordium you may think proper to adopt. Some of them, for instance, appear more especially adapted to the narrative; as *person, time, place,* &c.; others to the explicatory; as *principles, end proposed, distinguish and define,* &c.; others to the argumentative; as *grounds, refute objections,* &c.: and almost all of them may, in some way or other, find a place in the observational. But the examples will, I doubt not, afford the best illustration of this matter; and therefore I hasten to lay these before you.

### I. RISE FROM SPECIES TO GENUS.

No. 1.—Beddome, on Rom. ii. 15: "Their consciences also bearing witness." From a particular kind of witness-

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ing he takes occasion to discuss, in his Introduction, the more general idea. The author says,

At the mouth of two or three witnesses, it is said, shall every word be established. Thus the record which God has given of his Son is confirmed by "three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;" and "by three on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood." Thus also there will be three credible and authentic witnesses against the sinner in the great day: God himself, who knows our secret thoughts, is an eye and ear witness of all we do and say. Also the divine word, especially the holy and righteous law of God; "for," says our Lord to the Jews, "there is one that accuseth, even Moses, in whom ye trust." The word accuses the penitent sinner to himself, and the impenitent sinner to God. Conscience also, which will then be freed from every corrupt bias, and roused from its present state of stupefaction. There are times, even in this world, when conscience is aroused to do its office, and in such a manner as to make the sinner tremble. The apostle is speaking of the heathen world, when he says, "Their consciences also bearing them witness;" but it may be applied to all mankind.

He then returns to the particular subject of the text. The language is rough, but it suits a searching subject, and it suits the point in hand.

No. 2.—Simeon, on Mark x. 49, 50. The text specifies how our Lord acted on a particular occasion; and our author enters in his introduction into the conduct which he uniformly manifested on all occasions.

Our Lord, like the sun in the firmament, prosecuted without intermission the great ends of his ministry, diffusing innumerable blessings wheresoever he bent his course.

By this remark he connects the single fact before him with the character and conduct of Christ. There is a noble

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abruptness in this exordium that is calculated to arrest attention: Claude indeed condemns the practice of introducing a sermon by a metaphor, yet he also mentions an exception; and I cannot but think this instance of Mr. Simeon's not only allowable, but also very beautiful.

No. 3.—The same author, on 1 Pet. i. 6, 7: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice," &c. Peter here writes in order to console the people of God. This suggests the more general idea that it is the duty of ministers to comfort them; and this again suggests a remark on the general duties of the ministry.

The enlightening and converting of souls are the first objects of a minister's attention.

Nevertheless the comforting of God's people is also an essential part of his duty, as Isa. xl. 1.

Peter is a striking pattern of a sympathizing and affectionate pastor. He writes to the scattered people of God, who needed consolation, &c.

No. 4.—Simeon, vol. iii., p. 23, on Luke vi. 47—49: "Whosoever cometh to me," &c. From the description here given of different characters our author passes into the importance of ministerial discrimination generally.

It is of great importance, in preaching the gospel, to discriminate between the different characters to whom we deliver our message, and to separate the precious from the vile. If this be neglected the wicked will hold fast their delusions, and the righteous continue in bondage to their fears; but, if we be faithful in the discharge of this part of our duty, those among whom we minister will be led to a knowledge of their own character and condition. Our blessed Lord, at the conclusion of his sermon on the mount, shows us how we should apply our subjects to the hearts and consciences of our hearers. In the words read our Lord describes, I. The character of the godly. II. That of the ungodly.

No. 5.—Jay, vol. ii., p. 219, on 2 Pet. i. 11: "For so

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an entrance shall be administered," &c. The text contains the particular argument employed by the apostle to urge Christians to such a course of conduct as tended to make their calling and election sure. Our author takes occasion in his exordium to speak of that *class* of motives to which the apostle's argument belongs.

My brethren, among the various motives with which revelation abounds, there are none more solemn and impressive than those which are derived from death. Hence the sacred writers often refer to it. They remind us of the suddenness of its arrival; they forewarn us of the nearness of its approach; they also intimate the importance of its consequences, as terminating this state of trial, sealing up our characters, and transmitting them to the judgment of the great day, to be opened and published before an assembled world.

The apostle urges the *manner* of our dying; he would have us die *well*—not only in a state of salvation, but of peace and triumph, so that "an *entrance*," &c.

No. 6.—Simeon, on Isa. vi. 5—7: 'Then, said I, Woe is me!" &c. The vision of the prophet, during which these words were uttered, leads to a general remark upon the subject of visions, &c.

Previous to the full revelation of himself in the gospel, God was pleased to communicate his mind and will to men by dreams and visions, which, since the completion of the sacred canon, are no longer to be expected. But we must not therefore imagine that the revelations so made are less interesting to us than those which proceeded more immediately from the enlightening influences of the Holy Ghost. The same importance must be attached to every thing which God has spoken, so far, at least, as the instruction which is intended to be conveyed is itself important. For instance, the vision of Isaiah seems to have been a peculiar favour vouchsafed to him; but still it contains many



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instructive lessons for us: and in this two-fold view we will consider it.

A very numerous train of similar examples might be added; for one of the first operations of a cultivated mind upon any subject is that which connects such subject with the class to which it may belong. If we are about to discourse on the subject of drunkenness, or covetousness, or any particular act of wickedness, nothing can be more natural than to commence with some remark upon the depravity of the human heart or upon sin in general; if our text contains a statement or a threatening of any particular judgment, the mind immediately reverts to the justice of God, to his judgments in general, &c.; if any blessing, promised or conferred, forms the subject of discourse, then we are led to some remark upon the benevolence or the mercy of Jehovah, or upon the nature, importance, or excellence of those blessings which are promised in his word, &c.

II. DESCEND FROM GENUS TO SPECIES.

This Topic is certainly more adapted to suggest a mode of discussion, or thoughts for illustration, than to afford any hints for an exordium; yet an occasional reference to it may serve to promote that variety which it is desirable to preserve. Thus, for instance, suppose you had been preaching a sermon, or a course of sermons, on the attributes of God, which you designed to improve by a discourse on Matt. v. 48: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect"—it might be very proper in your exordium to descend from the general truth—divine perfection—and to recapitulate the particular attributes on which you had previously discoursed at large, &c.

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III. DIFFERENT CHARACTERS OF A VIRTUE OR VICE.

This Topic may occasionally occupy the exordium, although, like the last, it is more suited to the body of a discourse. In such case your description must of course be very brief; and, if you have previously preached upon the virtue or vice under consideration, the principal points of your sermon may be thrown together in a concise manner for an exordium.

No. 7.—Blair has an exordium of this kind prefixed to his sermon on Gal. vi. 9: "Let us not be weary in well-doing," &c. He gives a brief description of discontent, and makes this the foundation of an observational discourse: the last head of which is not, however, put in the form of an observation.

Discontent is the most general of all the evils which trouble the life of man. It is a disease which every where finds materials to feed itself: if real distresses be wanting, it substitutes such as are imaginary in their place. It converts even the good things of the world, when they have been long enjoyed, into occasions of disgust. In the midst of prosperity it disposes us to complain; and renders tranquillity tiresome only because it is uniform. There is no wonder that this spirit of restlessness and dissatisfaction, which corrupts every terrestrial enjoyment, should have sometimes penetrated into the region of virtue. Good men are not without their frailties; and the perverseness incident to human nature too readily leads those who become weary of all other things, to be weary, also, in well-doing. The pleasure expected in devotion sometimes fails, and the injustice of the world often sours and frets them. Friends prove ungrateful; enemies misrepresent, rivals supplant them: and part, at least, of the mortifications which they suffer, they begin to ascribe to virtue. Is this all the reward of serving God, and renouncing the pleasures of sin? "Verily, in vain I have cleansed my heart, and



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washed my hands in innocency. Behold, the ungodly prosper in the world, and have more than heart can wish; while, all the day long, I am plagued and chastened every morning."—To such persons as these, and to all who are in hazard of being infected with their spirit, I now address myself. In reply to their complaints, I purpose to mention some considerations from which I hope to make it appear that there is no sufficient reason for our being weary in well-doing: and that, taking human life upon the whole, virtue is far the most eligible portion of man.

I. Uneasiness and disappointment are inseparable, in some degree, from every state on earth. II. The uneasiness belonging to a sinful course is far greater than what attends a course of well-doing. III. The resources of virtue are much greater than those of the world; the compensations which it makes for our distresses, far more valuable. IV. The assured hope which good men enjoy of a full reward at last.

No. 8.—Simeon on Matt. x. 8: "Freely ye have received, freely give."

Compassion for the wants and miseries of men is a very distinguished feature of the Christian character. It is a lovely grace, even when it has respect only to the temporal necessities of mankind; * * * * but it is of a far higher stamp when it is called forth by a view of their spiritual wants, and seeks to administer to their eternal welfare. * * * * Such was the feeling which our blessed Lord and Saviour chiefly manifested on the occasion before us, and sought to diffuse amongst those who were to be his more immediate followers and servants: "When he saw the multitudes," we are told, "he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd."

*** The asterisks mark the openings where the description might very properly be extended by this Topic.

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IV. THE RELATION OF ONE SUBJECT TO ANOTHER.

No. 9.—The Preacher, vol. i., p. 134, on Phil. iii. 12: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect," &c.

There is an intimate connexion (or relation) between justification by the righteousness of Christ, and sanctification by the Holy Spirit; for in the same breath in which the apostle prays for the one, he also prays for the other.

Some who are advocates for free justification, deny both the doctrine of sanctification and progressive holiness; but here they are united.

Three things are taught us in the text; namely, the origin, the progress, and the end of true religion.

No. 10.—South, on Ps. xxxix. 9: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it." Here the subject is submission, and our author takes occasion to remark on the graces of faith, &c., and to mark their mutual dependance and relation.

If we would give one general account of all the duties that are incumbent upon a Christian, we shall find them reducible to these three, *faith, obedience,* and *patience:* and the vital principle, that animates and runs through them all, is *submission.* Faith being a submission of our understanding to what God commands us to believe; obedience being a submission of our will to what God commands us to do; and, lastly, patience being a submission of the whole man to what God commands us to suffer.

It is one of the arts of patience still to be beforehand with an affliction, and to expect that at all times which a man may endure at any; and, since the healthiest of men may be sick, it is but prudence, while they are well, to have a remedy about them.

In the text we have these two general parts:—I. David's submissive deportment under a sharp affliction;—"I was

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dumb, I opened not my mouth." II. The ground, and reason of such his deportment, which was the procedure of that affliction from God;—"I opened not my mouth because thou didst it."

No. 11.—Blair, on Acts x. 38: "Jesus of Nazareth—who went about doing good,"—avails himself of this Topic, by considering the character of Christ under an aspect different from that which the text presents, but still related to it. He observes,

There are two great aspects under which we may contemplate the appearance of our blessed Lord on the earth. One is his coming into the world in order to make expiation to divine justice, by his sufferings and death for the guilt of the human race. The other is his coming to act as the enlightener and reformer of the world by his doctrine and his life. The first of these views is the most sublime; as on the atonement which he made for us depend all our hopes of the pardon of sin, and of life eternal. In the other view it is also of high importance that all Christians should frequently consider him, in order to the proper regulation of their conduct: the observation of his example is no less necessary for this purpose than attention to his doctrine; as by his doctrine he taught us what we are bound to do, so in his example he showed us what we ought to be.

### V. Things implied.

No. 12.—The Preacher, vol. v., p. 291, contains an example quite in point, on Matt. xii. 30: "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

Several things are implied in this language—

1. That Christ is engaged in an important *contest*, and calls upon us to take a part with him. The cause which he has undertaken is the cause of truth, of righteousness, and of God, against the interests of falsehood, of sin, and

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of Satan. The great majority of mankind are on the side of the latter; Christ calls on us to come off, and take sides with him.

2. That to be *with Christ*, in this contest, is to embrace the gospel, to obey its precepts, and openly to profess our adherence to the Saviour. And he that will be his disciple must take up his cross, deny himself, and follow him.

3. That there is a description of characters who are *not with Christ*, and yet would not wish to be thought his enemies; and to these the words of the text principally refer. Who then are they? Not the openly profane, or avowed unbeliever; but the undecided and half-hearted, who appear to be between Christ and the world; who inhabit the confines of religion and irreligion, and are occasionally on one side and on the other. This state of indecision in religious matters is here construed into direct and positive enmity; for "he that is not with me," saith Christ, "is against me."

This is rather too stiff for the present day; but the same thoughts might be presented in a more continuous and agreeable manner, and would thus form a very suitable introduction to the general divisions, which are,

I. Endeavour to point out a few of those characters which may be considered as undecided. II. The equity and propriety of the construction put upon such indecision, or what grounds there are for its being accounted enmity.

### VI. Person speaking or acting.

This is a Topic quite suited to exordiums: indeed, so much so that some preachers are accustomed to recur to it by far too often; it is of very easy application, and always has some connexion with the subject, and it is therefore necessary to guard against its too frequent occurrence. The following examples are appropriate.

No. 13.—Simeon, on Isa. i. 2, 3: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken," &c.

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It is the Lord God Almighty that now speaketh respecting us. Let every ear attend; let every heart be humbled in the dust before him. He hath a controversy with us, and a complaint against us: and he summons both heaven and earth to attend the truth of his charge, and the equity of his judgment. Though he is a Sovereign, and amenable to none, yet he does frequently make his appeals to the whole creation, and constitute creatures judges between himself and us (Mic. vi. 2). In this charge we behold, I. The evil we have committed. II. The extent of our criminality.

No. 14.—Blair, on Job x. 1: "My soul is weary of my life."

Job, in the first part of his days, was the greatest of all the men in the East. His possessions were large; his family were numerous and flourishing; his own character was fair and blameless. Yet this man it pleased God to visit with extraordinary reverses of fortune. He was robbed of his whole substance. His sons and daughters all perished; and he himself, fallen from his high estate, childless, and reduced to poverty, was smitten with a sore disease. His friends came about him, seemingly with the purpose of administering comfort. But, from a harsh and ill-founded construction of the intention of Providence in his disasters, they only added to his sorrows by unjust upbraiding. Hence those many pathetic lamentations with which his book abounds, poured forth in the most beautiful and touching strain of oriental poetry. In one of those hours of lamentation, the sentiment in the text was uttered: "My soul is weary of my life;" a sentiment which surely, if any situation can justify it, was allowable in the case of Job.

In situations very different from that of Job, under calamities far less severe, it is not uncommon to find such a sentiment working in the heart, and sometimes breaking forth from the lips of men. Many, very many, there are

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who, on one occasion or other, have experienced this weariness of life, and been tempted to wish that it would come to a close. Let us now examine in what circumstances this feeling may be deemed excusable; in what it is to be held sinful; and under what restrictions we may, on any occasion, be permitted to say, "My soul is weary of my life."

No. 15.—Walker makes a judicious use of this Topic in the exordium of his sermon on Ps. xxxix. 12: "For I am a stranger with thee and a sojourner, as all my fathers were."

Had these words been spoken by one of the Rechabites, who were commanded by their father Jonadab "that they should drink no wine, neither build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyards, nor have any, but that they should dwell in tents all their days," we might perhaps have considered them as pointing merely at the *peculiarities* of that sequestered tribe, by which they were distinguished from the rest of mankind: but as they are the words of David, who himself was a king, one of the lords of this earth, who had every inducement to magnify his office, and to make his importance appear in its utmost extent, they can lie under no suspicion of partiality; and therefore challenge the greatest regard. It is true that he wrote this psalm under the heavy pressure of affliction; but we find him using the same language in the height of his prosperity: "We are strangers," said he, "before thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers: our days on earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding:" 1 Chron. xxix. 15. Never did the Jewish nation appear to be more at home than at that time: as for David, his happiness was so complete, that, instead of asking any additional favours, he could hardly find words to express his gratitude for those he had already received. Yet amidst all his affluence, when he possessed every outward comfort his heart could wish, still he called himself a stranger and a sojourner before God. We must



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therefore consider the words of my text as expressing the fixed and habitual sentiments of David's heart. In his most prosperous condition he did not look upon this earth as his home; but extended his views to the heavenly world, that glorious and permanent inheritance of the saints, which is "incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away."

Among the various objects of inquiry that might readily occur to us upon reading this passage, the two following appear to me the most interesting and profitable;—I. Whence is it that holy men consider themselves as strangers and sojourners upon earth? II. What manner of life is most expressive of this character, and best suited to the condition of strangers and sojourners?

No. 16.—The same author, on Josh. xxiii. 11: "Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the Lord your God."

These are the words of a soldier and a saint: a soldier equally brave and successful, a saint distinguished by the testimony of God himself. They are the words of Joshua, the victorious leader of God's ancient people, and make a part of that solemn valedictory speech which he pronounced in a national assembly of his countrymen, a little before his death. The same happy union of fortitude and piety, which had rendered his active life so glorious, still shone forth with undiminished strength, to adorn the concluding scene. Never did the magnanimity of the soldier, never did the piety of the saint, never did the generous zeal of the patriot, appear with more becoming grace and dignity than when this great and good man rose up in the presence of all his brethren, and thus addressed the tribes of Israel: "I am old and stricken in age: and ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations, because of you; for the Lord your God is he that hath fought for you," &c. An address more worthy of the speaker, or better adapted to those who heard it, cannot be

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devised than that which these verses present to our view. Long had he been dead to pride and self-interest. He sought not his own praise, but the honour of his God, and the prosperity of his brethren. He reminds them, indeed, that he had often led them to victory and triumph; but with the same breath he reminds them, also, "that it was the Lord their God that fought for them." To him therefore the sole tribute of praise was due. This was the important truth which Joshua chiefly recommended to the attention of his hearers. And now, knowing that the time of his departure was at hand, as the last and strongest proof of his affection and care,—with the authority of a governor he commands,—with the bowels of a father he entreats,—and, with all the seriousness of a dying saint, he obtests them "to love the Lord their God."

### VII. State of person speaking, &c.

No. 17.—Blair has a very beautiful exordium on this Topic. The text is Esther v. 13: "Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

These are the words of one who, though high in station and in power, confessed himself to be miserable. Haman, an Amalekite, who inherited all the ancient enmity of his race to the Jewish nation, had been advanced by Ahasuerus to the chief dignity in his kingdom. He appears, from what is recorded of him, to have been a very wicked minister. Raised to greatness without merit, he employed his power solely for the gratification of his passions. As the honours which he possessed were next to royal, his pride was every day fed with that servile homage which is peculiar to Asiatic courts, and all the servants of the king prostrated themselves before him. In the midst of this general adulation, one person only stooped not to Haman. This was Mordecai the Jew, who, knowing this Amalekite to be an enemy to the people of God, and, with

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virtuous indignation despising that insolence of prosperity with which he saw him lifted up, "bowed not, nor did him reverence." On this appearance of disrespect from Mordecai, Haman was full of wrath, "but he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone." Personal revenge was not sufficient to satisfy him. So violent and black were his passions, that he resolved to exterminate the whole nation to which Mordecai belonged. Abusing, for this cruel purpose, the favour of his credulous sovereign, he obtained a decree to be sent forth, that, against a certain day, all the Jews throughout the Persian dominions should be put to the sword. Meanwhile, confident of success, and blind to approaching ruin, he continued exulting in his prosperity. Invited by Ahasuerus to a royal banquet, which Esther the queen had prepared, "he went forth that day joyful, and with a glad heart." But behold how slight an incident was sufficient to poison his joy! As he went forth, he saw Mordecai in the king's gate; and observed that he still refused to do him homage. "He stood not up, nor was moved for him;" although he well knew the formidable designs which Haman was preparing to execute. One private man, who despised his greatness, and disdained submission, while a whole kingdom trembled before him; one spirit, which the utmost stretch of his power could neither subdue nor humble, blasted his triumphs. His whole soul was shaken with a storm of passion. Wrath, pride, and a desire of revenge, rose into fury. With difficulty he restrained himself in public; but, as soon as he came to his own house, he was forced to disclose the agony of his mind. He gathered together his friends and family, with Zeresh his wife. "He told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. He said, moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but my-

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self; and to-morrow also I am invited unto her with the king."—After this preamble, what is the conclusion?—"Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate."

This illustration of the state and character of Haman admirably prepares for the observations which form the discourse.

I. How miserable is vice when one guilty passion creates so much torment! II. How unavailing is prosperity, when, in the height of it, a single disappointment can destroy the relish of all its pleasures! III. How weak is human nature, which, in the absence of real, is thus prone to form to itself imaginary, woes!

No. 18—The same author on Eccles. vii. 2—4: "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting," &c.

Many of the maxims contained in the book of Ecclesiastes will appear strange sayings to the men of the world. But, when they reflect on the state and character of him who delivers them, they cannot but admit that his tenets deserve a serious and attentive examination. For they are not the doctrines of a pedant, who, from an obscure retirement, declaims against pleasures which he never knew. They are not the invectives of a disappointed man, who takes revenge upon the world by satirizing those enjoyments which he sought in vain to obtain. They are the conclusions of a great and prosperous prince, who had once given full scope to his desires; who was thoroughly acquainted with life in its most flattering scenes; and who now, reviewing all that he had enjoyed, delivers to us the result of long experience and tried wisdom. None of his principles seem, at first view, more dubious and unexceptionable than those which the text presents. To assert that sorrow is preferable to mirth, and the house of mourning to the house of feasting; to advise men to choose mortification and sadness when it is in their power to indulge in

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joy, may appear harsh and unreasonable doctrines. They may, perhaps, be accounted enemies to the innocent enjoyment of life, who give countenance to so severe a system, and thereby increase the gloom which already sits sufficiently heavy on the condition of man. But let this censure be suspended, until we examine with care into the spirit and meaning of the sentiments here delivered.

No. 19.—The same author, with some slight alterations, on Matt. xxvi. 29: "I will not drink henceforth," &c.

Jesus was now descending to the lowest state of suffering. He had for three years of his public ministry been watched with a jealous eye by his enemies; and the time was come when they were to prevail against him. A few friends he had from the beginning selected, who, in every vicissitude to the present time, remained faithfully attached to him. With these friends he was now meeting for the last time, on the very evening in which he was betrayed and seized. He perfectly knew all that was to befall him; he knew that he now sat down for the last time with those who had been the companions of his labours, the confidants of all his griefs. He knew that within a few hours he was to be torn from this loved society by a band of ruffians, and by to-morrow was to be publicly arraigned as a malefactor; and with a heart full of tenderness he said, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover before I suffer," &c.

Now when it is considered that Blair had no design to touch upon this Topic in the discussion of his subject, which was "a preparation for death," there was great propriety in thus treating in his exordium of the state of the speaker when the words were uttered; and there was also great judgment in it, as there was the easiest transition possible from the exordium to the subject, as well as the most natural affinity between both. With the sentiments expressed by the doctor in this sermon, I have at present no business.

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## VIII.—Observe time.

No. 20.—Horsley has an exordium on this Topic, vol. i., p. 260. John xiii. 34: "A new commandment I give unto you," &c.

In that memorable night when divine love and infernal malice had each their perfect work,—the night when Jesus was betrayed into the hands of those who thirsted for his blood, and the mysterious scheme of man's redemption was brought to its accomplishment,—Jesus, having finished the paschal supper, and instituted those holy mysteries by which the thankful remembrance of his oblation of himself is continued in the church until his second coming; when all this was finished, and nothing now remained of his great and painful undertaking but the last trying part of it, to be led like a sheep to the slaughter,—in that trying hour, just before he retired to the garden, where the power of darkness was to be permitted to display on him its last and utmost effort,—Jesus gave it solemnly in charge to the eleven apostles, whose loyalty remained as yet unshaken, "to love one another as he had loved them."

No. 21.—Jay makes a good use of this Topic in his Morning Exercises, vol. i., p. 1, just published. Exod. xl. 2: "On the first day of the first month thou shalt set up the tabernacle."

And why was this period chosen for the erection? God has always reasons for his conduct; but he does not always "give account of his matters." For, first, things that are the same to God are not the same to us. Our goodness extendeth not to him. Religion regards the exigencies of man. All places as well as times are alike to God, yet we never feel in a common dwelling the solemnity that seizes us in the sanctuary. The first day of the year was no more to God than any other, but it would render the service more memorable and impressive to the people; therefore "on the first day," &c.

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It is well to begin a new year with some good work, and to commence serving God after a new manner. And have we no tabernacle to erect on this first day of this first month? No Ebenezer to raise?

No. 22.—Preacher, vol. i., p. 162, on Ps. xxiii. 5: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies," &c.

This psalm was probably written by David when quietly seated on his throne, after the Lord had delivered him from all his enemies round about. It is full of holy exultation. In the former part he dwells on the character of Jehovah as his Shepherd: and, having been in that capacity himself, he fully understood its import. In the latter part of the psalm he changes the figure, and celebrates the mercy and goodness of God as a Father.

The gratulations in the text would very well suit such a time as that of David's bringing up the ark from the house of Obededom to the city of David with gladness of heart, and when he made a great feast to all the people: 2 Sam. vi. 15—19. Or when the promise of establishing his kingdom was delivered to him by Nathan the prophet, ver. 16. And as it was common at feasts to anoint the head with ointment, so this circumstance is referred to in the text, as well as the abundant provisions which were prepared on such occasions: "Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over."

No. 23.—Simeon, on Luke xix. 37, 38: "And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice," &c.

During the greater part of our Lord's ministry upon earth, he abstained, for the most part, from an avowal of his Messiahship. Now, however, the time being come for him to return to his Father, he openly acknowledged himself to be that king of whom the prophet Zechariah had spoken, saying, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

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shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass."

## IX. Place.

No. 24.—Mr. T. Scott, of Aston Sandford, on Phil. i. 27: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ."

St. Paul wrote this epistle, as well as some others, from his prison at Rome: and it is manifest that the Lord was with him, as he had been with Joseph in similar circumstances, which rendered his confinement unspeakably more pleasant than a splendid palace with a guilty conscience and ungovernable passions. Instead of dejection, murmurs, or resentment, we find the apostle uniformly employing the language of cheerfulness, confidence, and exultation. He declares that "to him to live was Christ, and to die gain." All his credit, interest, business, and pleasure in life, consisted in communion with Christ, and earnest endeavours to glorify him and promote his cause; and he was sure that death, in whatever form it should arrest him, would prove his richest advantage.

But though the apostle had a longing "desire to depart and be with Christ, as far better;" yet he was willing to continue on earth "for the furtherance and joy of faith" of his beloved people.—As if a pardoned rebel should voluntarily submit to the inconveniences and sufferings of a dungeon, in order to recommend the clemency of his prince to other criminals; or be helpful to those who, having likewise received mercy, were for some reasons retained a while longer in confinement.

Hence he took occasion to exhort the Philippians in the following words, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together

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for the faith of the gospel, and in nothing terrified by your adversaries."

From the part of this exhortation contained in our text I shall endeavour, I. To give a compendious view of the gospel of Christ. II. To show that this gospel, when rightly understood and truly believed, will produce a corresponding conduct and conversation. III. To mention some leading particulars in which "a conversation becoming the gospel more especially consists. IV. To make some remarks on the emphatical word "Only."

No. 25.—Davies, vol. iii., p. 22, on Acts xvii. 30: "The times of this ignorance God winked at," &c.

We here find Paul in as learned an assembly as perhaps he ever appeared in. We find him at Athens, a city of Greece, famous all over the world for learning; a city where Socrates, Plato, and the most illustrious philosophers of antiquity lived and taught. We find him in the famous court of Areopagus, the most honourable place of that city, &c.

Our author, with great propriety, allotted this Topic to the beginning of his discourse; any where else it would have interrupted his design. In the beginning he turned it to account, by taking occasion to observe that repentance concerned the most celebrated philosophers, as well as any other class of persons, and he uses this observation as a link by which he united his exordium to the subject itself.

It may be here observed, once for all, that it is by no means necessary to confine your remarks in an exordium to one Topic: on the contrary one Topic is frequently mentioned in order to usher in another that is intended to occupy a more prominent part. In the example from Scott (No. 24), though the *place* seems to have suggested the principal thoughts, and the simile in the second paragraph is taken from the same consideration, yet there is a transition from this Topic, and a very proper one, to the *state* of the speaker. The following is an example in which

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the author makes a very easy and natural transition from the Topic *time* to that of *place*.

No. 26.—The Preacher, vol. vi. p. 40, on Ps. lxviii. 15—17: "The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan, a high hill as the hill of Bashan," &c.

Probably these verses were sung at the time of carrying up the ark of God to Mount Zion, to the tabernacle which David had prepared for it. While ascending the holy mount, the hill of Bashan would be in view, a very lofty and fertile mountain in Canaan. In poetic language Bashan looks down from its towering height upon Zion with contempt; nevertheless it was the hill where God would dwell, and where the ark should rest; and therefore it was far superior to the hill of Bashan. It was the seat of holy worship, and the dwelling-place of the Most High. It also became the city of the great King, where stood his palace, the temple of Jerusalem, and where he fixed his imperial throne; Ps. xlviii.

Mount Zion of old was a figure of the church of God, which is his spiritual empire: and, as nations usually strive for pre-eminence, so the heathen and idolatrous kingdoms which surrounded Israel endeavoured to gain the ascendancy over the hill of God. They boasted of their strength and numbers, of their retinue and splendour. Rabshakeh boasted of the kingdom of Assyria, that it had conquered all the surrounding countries, and would be the ruin of Israel: Isai. xxxvii. 10. After this, Babylon "leaped as a high hill," and looked down upon Israel with contempt. But Assyria and Babylon must fall, and all other kingdoms be destroyed; and Christ's kingdom must stand when they are broken in pieces, and shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth; Dan. ii. 35.

The figurative language of the text teaches us to consider, I. The superior dignity and glory of the church of God over all the kingdoms of this world. II. That it is

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much more honourable to be devoted to the service of God than to be exalted to the highest state of worldly glory.

### X. Persons addressed.

The examples of exordiums on this Topic are so numerous as to render the task of selection somewhat difficult: the following are offered as furnishing a suitable variety in the application of the Topic.

No. 27.—Blair on Titus ii. 6: "Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded." His exordium turns on the peculiar applicability of this exhortation to young persons.

Sobriety of mind is one of those virtues which the present condition of human life strongly inculcates. The uncertainty of its enjoyments checks presumption; the multiplicity of its dangers demands perpetual caution. Moderation, vigilance, and self-government are duties incumbent on all; but especially on such as are beginning the journey of life. To them, therefore, the admonition in the text is, with great propriety, directed, though there is reason to fear that by them it is in hazard of being least regarded. Experience enforces the admonition on the most giddy, after they have advanced in years. But the whole state of youthful views and passions is adverse to sobriety of mind. The scenes which present themselves, at our entering upon the world, are uncommonly flattering. Whatever they be in themselves, the lively spirits of the young gild every opening prospect. The field of hope appears to stretch wide before them. Pleasure seems to put forth its blossoms on every side. Impelled by desire, forward they rush with inconsiderate ardour: prompt to decide and to choose; averse to hesitate or to inquire; credulous, because untaught by experience; rash, because unacquainted with danger; headstrong, because unsubdued by disappointment. Hence arise the perils, of which it is

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my design at present to warn them, Though the words of the text are directly addressed to young *men*, yet, as the same admonition is given in a preceding verse to the other sex, the instructions which arise from the text are to be considered as common to both. I intend, first, to show them the importance of beginning early to give serious attention to their conduct; and, next, to point out those virtues which they ought chiefly to cultivate.

No. 28.—Walker on Phil. i. 27: "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ."

It will be to little purpose to inquire what kind of conversation becometh the gospel of Christ, till we be satisfied, in the first place, that this charge, which was originally addressed to the Philippians, may, with equal propriety, be addressed to us. The qualifying particle *only*, with which the apostle introduces the exhortation, plainly denotes that, in his own judgment, the demand he made was no less moderate than it was just. To this conclusion he was naturally led by the character and circumstances of those to whom he wrote. His epistle was inscribed, not to unbelieving Jews or Gentiles, but to saints in Christ Jesus, to men who had been converted to the Christian faith, as we learn from the foregoing part of the chapter. And it is material to observe that as Christianity had been treated with peculiar indignity at Philippi, where, by order of the magistrates, Paul and his companion Silas were publicly scourged and cast into prison, therefore the profession of the gospel, in such a place, was justly entitled to the most favourable construction; for nothing less than a deep conviction of its truth and excellence could be supposed to have induced any inhabitant of that city to profess a religion that inevitably exposed him to those contemptuous as well as painful sufferings, which a generous and feeling mind would of all others most anxiously wish to avoid.

It is true, and it ought to be gratefully acknowledged, that our present situation in these lands is very different

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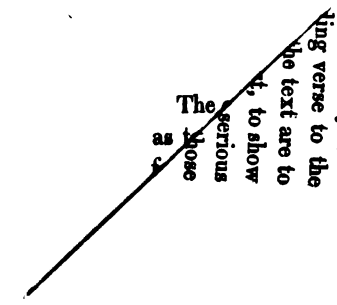
much more honourable, than to be exalted to



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demand of the apostle is, ... ... . )solutely necessary to preserve the peace and purity of our own hearts, and to support that character which the most profligate reverence, and which all who can discern real beauty and excellence will covet to possess—I mean the venerable character of an upright man.

Having thus prepared the way, by showing that the same charge which was primarily addressed to the Philippians may, with strict justice and propriety, be extended to us, let us now proceed to examine, with attention and candour, the standard to which our conformity is enjoined; or, in other words, let us inquire into that gospel of Christ to which our conversation, that is, the whole of our external conduct, as expressing the inward temper of our hearts, ought to be suited.

No. 29.—The same author on Job xxxvi. 21: "Take heed, regard not iniquity; for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction." Here the exordium commences with our Topic—then passes into the seventh Topic(person speaking), which leads naturally to a summary of Elihu's address,—after which the present Topic is resumed.

These words were addressed to Job, who, from the height of prosperity, was suddenly plunged into the deepest and most complicated distress. They are the words of

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Elihu, the youngest, but by far the wisest and most candid, of all Job's friends. Moved with zeal for the honour of God, and with compassion to his friend, he unfolds the mysteries of Divine Providence; asserts and proves that affliction is designed for the trial of the good, as well as for the punishment of the bad; directs Job to the right improvement of his present distress, and comforts him with the prospect of a happy deliverance from it, as soon as his heart should be thoroughly moulded into a meek and patient submission to the will of his God. The latter part of the text contains a heavy censure, for which some of Job's impatient wishes for relief had no doubt given too just occasion. But these expressions, uttered in his haste, he afterwards retracted, and finally came out from the furnace of affliction like gold tried and refined by the fire.

## IX. State of Persons addressed.

No. 30.—Blair on Isa. v. 12: "They regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands."

It appears from many passages in the writings of this prophet that in his days great corruption of manners had begun to take place among the people of Israel. Originally a sober and a religious nation, accustomed to a simple and pastoral life, after they had enlarged their territories by conquest, and acquired wealth by commerce, they gradually contracted habits of luxury; and luxury soon introduced its usual train of attending evils. In the history of all nations the same circulation of manners has been found; and the age in which we live resembles, in this respect, the ages which have gone before it. Forms of iniquity may vary; but the corrupt propensities of men remain at all times much the same; the revolutions from primitive simplicity to the refinements of criminal luxury have been often exhibited on the stage of the world. The reproof

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directed in the text to the Jews of that ancient age will be found equally applicable to the manners of many in modern times.

No. 31.—The Preacher, vol. i. p. 153, on Lam. iii. 22: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not."

The prophet, and the people whom he represents, were at this time in great distress, and the lamentations of the church in captivity are very tenderly described in this chapter. But, though in deep affliction, this was the time to reflect on the divine goodness, and when it could be done to the greatest advantage. Bad as was their present state, and great as was the occasion of their sorrow, it might nevertheless have been worse with them. Instead of being afflicted, and sent into captivity, they might have been utterly consumed: and it is ascribed to the Lord's mercies that they had not their full desert. Such is the tendency of sanctified affliction.

No. 32.—Walker commences his exordium on Rev. iii. 18: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire," &c.—by stating his intention to give some account of the person who gave the advice, and also of those to whom it was addressed, before he entered upon the consideration of the counsel itself which was to form the subject of discourse. After commenting at some length on the former of these Topics (the 6th) he makes the following remarks upon the state of the persons addressed:—

The persons to whom this advice or counsel was addressed were members of Christ's visible church, and inhabitants of the ancient city of Laodicea; it appears also, from the description given of them, that, with respect to their spiritual concerns, they were in a very degenerate and wretched condition. The first thing taken notice of is their lukewarmness and indifference—a temper which is peculiarly loathsome and offensive to Christ, and therefore he threatens to "spue them out of his mouth," that is, to testify his dis-

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pleasure against them by some very awful and remarkable judgments. Their state is more fully represented in the verse preceding the text, where the Faithful and True Witness tells them that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; and, which prodigiously aggravated both their guilt and misery, they knew it not —they were insensible of it; though they might have known it, yet they would not. Such was their woeful indifference that they did not examine their spiritual condition, but took it for granted, and boasted of it, that they were rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing. And now judge, my brethren, whether these persons were worthy of any notice or regard, I mean in a way of mercy; for that they merited wrath I suppose you will readily allow. Behold, then, and admire the amazing grace and condescension of our Lord. Though the wickedness of the Laodiceans, aggravated by their pride and loathsome indifference, cried aloud for vengeance, and nothing but vengeance, yet, lo! he vouchsafes to counsel them as a friend!

## XII. Principles.

No. 33.—Jay's Morning Exercises, vol. i. p. 27, on John i. 38: "Where dwellest thou?"

If we examine the principle of this inquiry we shall find that it was not curiosity, but regard: it was as much as to say, We wish to be better acquainted. John had spoken of him highly, and they had just seen him; but this, instead of satisfying them, drew forth their desire after more intimacy. Now this is common to all the subjects of divine grace, and arises from their love to him. For love longs to be near the object of attachment: separation is painful; distance is intolerable; while intercourse yields a pleasure words can no more describe than paint can describe light and heat, &c.



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No. 34.—Blair, on Jer. xlix. 11: "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them," &c.—commences by some remarks on the divine goodness, the principle involved in the language of the text.

No subject is more open to general observation, or more confirmed by manifold experience, than the goodness of God. The contemplation of the universe in which we dwell presents it perpetually to our view. Amidst the vast extent of creation, we discover no instance of mere pomp, or useless grandeur, but behold every thing contributing to the general good, and rendered subservient to the welfare, of the rational or sensible world. In the administration of Providence, the same principle of beneficence is conspicuous. The seasons are made regularly to return, and the earth to flourish; supply is bountifully provided for the wants of all creatures; and numberless comforts are prepared to sweeten human life. Most justly is he who hath established and who upholds this admirable order of things, to be esteemed the Father of mercies: and, accordingly, in this view he is often celebrated in Scripture: "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." "His tender mercies are over all his works." "His mercy is great unto the heavens, and it endureth for ever."

It appears worthy of particular observation that there is one light in which, more frequently than in any other, the goodness of God is presented to us in the sacred writings, namely, the light of compassion to the distresses of mankind.

The words which I have chosen for the text afford a very amiable view of that compassion which Scripture so often ascribes to the Supreme Being: "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." It will be worthy of our attention at present to inquire into the reasons why the Almighty is pleased to represent himself so often to us under this view; not only as the just and good Ruler of the universe, which is the first leading idea we naturally form of him, but

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as the Patron and Friend of the distressed part of mankind.

No. 35.—Simeon gives a similar example on Isa. lv. 1—3: "Ho every one that thirsteth," &c.

We cannot sufficiently admire the condescension and grace of God in noticing such insignificant and worthless creatures as we are. That he should provide for our returning wants, and permit us to ask of him the things we stand in need of, may well excite our deepest astonishment. But that he should be as much interested in our welfare as if his own happiness and glory depended on it, seems utterly incredible; yet that this is really the case is manifest from the earnest invitations and entreaties which he uses to prevail upon us to accept of mercy. In confirmation of this, we need only to notice the passage before us, in which God, with inexpressible affection, labours to awaken the attention of sinners to their own truest interest, and to bring them to the enjoyment of everlasting happiness. In these words we may observe an *invitation* and an *expostulation.*

This kind of exordium is well calculated to precede a discourse of *continued application.* It is soft and insinuating, and yet dignified. In general, strangers to the gospel cannot be more suitably addressed.

No. 36.—A somewhat different use is made of the Topic by Simeon, on 1 Chron. xxix. 17: "I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness."

The true way to form a correct estimate of our actions is to consider the principles from which they flow; for it is very possible that an act which may be highly esteemed among men may be an utter abomination in the sight of God (Luke xvi. 15), on account of the evil which produced it. Jehu obeyed an express command in destroying the house of Ahab, and was even rewarded by God for it; while he was also punished because in what he did he was



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impelled only by *his* pride and vanity, instead of consulting, as he *ought* to have done, the glory of his God. "Man looketh only on the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart:" 1 Sam. xvi. 7. The efforts which David made, in preparing for the erection of the temple, were amazing; yet, if they had proceeded from a desire of man's approbation, they would have been of no value before God. But David sought only to glorify his God: and for this integrity of principle he would appeal, yea, he *did* appeal, in the words of the text, to the heart-searching God.

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# LECTURE XXXII.

## TOPICAL EXORDIUMS.—PART II.

The applicability of the Topics to exordiums must, I doubt not, have been evident from the examples given in the last Lecture; and, as the great variety which has been suggested has already led me farther than I expected, I must dismiss the remaining Topics with a briefer notice. The first which now demands our attention is—

### XIII. Consider consequences.

Whether by this term we refer to the *deductions* which any truth may furnish, or to the *benefits* or *disadvantages* naturally resulting from the course of conduct or the particular action mentioned in any text, it must be obvious that this is a Topic not generally available in exordiums. Occasionally, however, it may be advisable to commence an argumentative discourse by referring to the erroneous consequences which have been drawn from our text; and, in the other view of the term, the Topic may be glanced at something after the manner of the following example:—

No. 37.—2 Cor. v. 10—12: "We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ," &c.

Man, degraded as he is, retains by necessity of nature the power of looking forward to futurity, and weighing the consequences of his present conduct; nay, he has a very strong propensity to this, even beyond what either duty or interest requires. But, while he paints in his delusions

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a thousand pleasing images of happiness to come, he is always (without the hope of the gospel) averse to look forward to evil; or, if he think it inevitable, yet he will place it in his imagination at the greatest possible distance. Still the voice of truth will be heard to correct his fancies. Truth again unites with conscience and reason, and will not suffer the man to escape the awful, certain, speedy approach of a futurity big with tremendous consequences beyond all calculation. One would think this sufficient to embitter sin, and render low enjoyments, carnal pleasures, disgusting to his mind. And if the serious thought of future judgment had its due weight, or if it were clearly placed before him with all its force and evidence, it must operate beneficially upon his fears till grace propounds a hope that will entirely change the scene. With such anticipations allow me to show, I. The certainty of a coming judgment. II. Its awfulness. III. Its equity. IV. Its irreversible nature.

### XIV. End proposed.

Frequently it may be proper to commence by a remark on the end proposed by the writer or speaker in the words of the text itself.

No. 38.—Walker, on Luke xii. 35—37: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning," &c.

The obvious design of (or end proposed in) this passage is, to excite us to a serious preparation for the awful solemnities of death and judgment. We are directed to consider ourselves as servants who have a Master in heaven, of whose return we have the strongest assurance, but are utterly ignorant of the precise time of his coming; and therefore it is both our duty and our interest to be always on our guard, and in a fit posture to receive him. The happy consequences of this will be, that our Lord will not only approve of our prudent and zealous concern to please him, but he will even delight to honour us. He will not deal

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with us as servants, but as friends; and will bestow upon us a reward infinitely beyond what any service could entitle us to. So that here we have a short but comprehensive account of the Christian's work and recompence; our duty and encouragements are both set before us.

No. 39.—The same author on Heb. xiii. 5: "He hath saith, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."

This comfortable declaration or promise is introduced by the apostle to enforce the duty of contentment (this is the end he proposed), to which he had exhorted the Hebrews. Nothing can be more unbecoming in a child of God than dissatisfaction with his present condition, or anxiety about his future provision in the world. It is no wonder to see worldly men, whose portion of good things lies wholly upon earth, loading themselves with thick clay, and eagerly grasping every thing which their craving appetites demand. Such persons cannot but be uneasy when they meet with disappointments, because, having nothing desirable in prospect beyond the grave, in losing their present enjoyments they lose their *all*. But the Christian, who knows of a treasure in heaven, a treasure incorruptible in its own nature, and which no fraud nor force can take from him, may and ought to look down with a holy indifference upon every thing here below, resigning himself entirely to the disposal of his heavenly Father, who not only knows what is best for him, but hath likewise obliged himself, by covenant and promise, to make all things work together for the eternal advantage of those who love him and confide in his mercy.

No. 40.—The Preacher, vol. v., p. 192, on Matt. vi. 19, 20: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," &c.

Our Lord *intended* in these words to check that inordinate attachment to the things of this life, and that eager pursuit of them, which we too frequently witness. He did not mean that it would be absolutely unlawful to lay up treasure on earth either for ourselves or our families: on

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the contrary, this is what the Scriptures both admit and require in certain cases, and for certain purposes. They teach us that though children are not to lay up for their parents, yet parents are to lay up for their children: 2 Cor. xii. 14; and more than this, that we are to provide for our own house, and to give to him that needeth: 1 Tim. v. 8. But if nothing were provided, we should have nothing to give, either to our children, or to any one besides. The text therefore is designed to show that our hearts must not be *set* on these things, but rather on things that are above, while the world finds only a subordinate place in our esteem. Much less are we to lay *up* treasure on earth, when we ought to lay it *out* for God, and in acts of justice and of mercy towards men.

Sometimes the design or intention of any conduct to which the text may refer, will form an appropriate exordium.

No. 41.—Simeon, on Isa. i. 4, 5: "Ah! sinful nation," &c.

The *end* for which God inflicts punishment upon his people is to bring them to repentance, and thereby prevent the necessity of punishing them in the eternal world; and, when this end is not answered, he leaves them to themselves, to follow the imaginations of their own hearts, and to bring upon themselves an accumulated weight of wrath. But, before he utterly abandons them, he sends them many solemn warnings, if that by any means he may prevail upon them to turn unto him. Extremely solemn is the reproof which he gave the Jews in the passage before us: he summons heaven and earth to hear his controversy, and to judge between him and his people; and then, in a way of affectionate expostulation, he threatens to cease from visiting them with parental chastisements, and to leave them to fill up the measure of their iniquities.

The words of our text, accommodated as they may be to our present circumstances, lead us to set before you, I. Our sinfulness. II. Our incorrigibleness.

The end proposed in the chapter or book (particularly

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an epistle) whence the text is selected, may also be noticed when it is sufficiently connected with the text itself, or when calculated to throw any light upon the subject of discourse. Where this is not the case it would evidently be absurd to drag in the Topic merely for convenience. Thus if I were to speak from Heb. xiii. 2—"Be not forgetful of strangers"—the design of the epistle would not be suitable. This design was to strengthen and encourage the Hebrews under their sufferings, by leading them to contemplate the great object of faith, Christ Jesus, in his original dignity; by showing the superiority of the Christian dispensation to that of the law; and by setting before them the many worthies of antiquity who did persevere through all difficulties, &c. Now these points have nothing to do with the above text, which is only brought in incidentally for a special purpose. Allow me to add that even where the end proposed in an epistle would be suitable, yet it must not be too often resorted to.

No. 42.—Blair, on 1 Tim. i. 5: "Now the end of the commandment is charity," &c.

It appears from this chapter that one design of the apostle, in writing to Timothy, was to guard him against certain corrupters of Christian doctrine, who had already arisen in the church. To their false representations of religion, he opposes that general view of it which is given in the text. Such summaries of religion frequently occur in the sacred writings; and are extremely useful. By the comprehensive energy with which they express the great lines of our duty, they both imprint them on our memory, and bring them home to our conscience with force. In the progress of this discourse, I hope to make it appear that the words of the text afford a most enlarged and instructive view of religion in all its chief parts.

No. 43.—Walker, on Rom. iii. 19: "Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law," &c.



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The great design of this epistle is to lead men to Christ as the only refuge for perishing sinners: and, because none will value a remedy but they who feel their disease and wish for health, the apostle therefore, in the two foregoing chapters, examines the condition both of Gentiles and Jews, under which denominations the whole posterity of Adam are included; and proves, by plain and undeniable facts, that all, without exception, are guilty before God, and consequently that all stand in need of a Saviour. In the verses immediately preceding my text he brings forward several quotations from the Old Testament writings, which give a very strong and melancholy representation of the corruption and depravity of the human kind. But lest the Jews should allege that these, and other passages of the like nature, were only descriptive of the Gentile nations, and could not justly be extended to them, whom God had chosen from the rest of the world, and set apart for himself as his peculiar inheritance, he judged it proper to remind them that the sacred books, from which he had taken the above description, were primarily addressed to the Jews, and designed for their instruction and use: "We know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law;" consequently these quotations, which are all expressly contained in the law, may and ought to be considered as a just representation of the state of those to whom that law or revelation was given. And he further adds that they were inserted in Scripture for this very purpose, that the plea of innocence being taken away from the Jews as well as from the Gentiles, "every mouth might be stopped, and thus all the world might become guilty before God."

The following example is formed on the end—or one end—proposed in the whole Scriptures, and therefore is a variety to our purpose.

No. 44.—Sterne's forty-first sermon. Heb. xii. 14: "Follow peace," &c.

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The great end and design of our holy religion, next to the main view of reconciling us to God, was to reconcile us to each other, by teaching us to subdue all those unfriendly dispositions in our nature which unfit us for happiness, and the social enjoyment of the many blessings which God has enabled us to partake in this world, to go on and exalt our nature, and, after the subduction of the most unfriendly of our passions, to plant in their room all those humane and benevolent inclinations which, in imitation of the perfections of God, should dispose us to extend our love and goodness to all our fellow-creatures according to the extent of our abilities, in like manner as the goodness of God extends itself over all the works of the creation. Could this be accomplished, the world would be worth living in, and might be considered by us a foretaste of what we should enter upon hereafter," &c.

Now if in this instance the author had taken the design of the epistle he would have done wrong, for the reason before mentioned; but, taking the design of the whole Scripture, he is perfectly right, and nothing could better suit his discourse. I may here add, that you may occasionally show in an exordium what was not the end proposed, and then pass to what was so.

### XV. Manner of an expression, &c.

No. 45.—Blair, on Luke xxi. 19: "In your patience possess ye your souls."

The possession of our souls is a very emphatical expression. It describes that state in which a man has both the full command and the undisturbed enjoyment of himself, in opposition to his undergoing some inward agitation which discomposes his powers. Upon the least reflection it must appear how essential such a state of mind is to happiness. He only who thus *possesses his soul* is capable of possessing any other thing with advantage; and, in

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order to attain and preserve this self-possession, the most important requisite is the habitual exercise of patience.

No. 40.—Simeon, on Isa. xliii. 1—3: "Thus saith the Lord that created thee," &c.

It is almost impossible for any one to read the Holy Scriptures with attention, and not to notice the very remarkable *manner* in which many of the richest promises are introduced. God seems in them to determine to magnify his own grace; and to show that where sin abounded, his grace shall much more abound" (Rom. v. 20). Let any one read the last two verses of the preceding chapter, and then pass on to the promise which I have just read, and he will see this illustrated in a very striking point of view, &c.

### XVI. Compare words and actions, &c.

No. 47.—J. Hill, on 2 Cor. v. 17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," &c.

In Isaiah's prophecy God promises, when Messiah's kingdom is spread throughout all the world, and all nations shall flow unto him, that he will "create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind:" Isa. lxv. 17. If we compare this representation with the passage before us, it will be evident that it is in part fulfilled in every true believer, in whose heart the kingdom of Christ is set up, his image formed, and all things that are contrary thereunto are in a measure passed away. "The tabernacle of God is with men," as it is expressed in a parallel place, Rev. xxi. 3, 4; "and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." This is called new heavens, and a new earth, because it is what the believing sinner was an utter stranger to before. Unregenerate sinners are darkness (Eph. v. 8), being without Christ, *i. e.*, in a state of distance and separation from him; they are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and

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strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Further, these new heavens, and this new earth, are said to be created; because the same almighty power which went to the producing this visible world out of nothing, is necessary to produce a principle of spiritual life in the heart of an unrenewed sinner; yea, the soul thus renewed is said to be a new creation; because every part of the man is changed, through this one act of God's almighty power and grace: "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The apostle lays a special emphasis upon it: it is spoken, either by way of attention, implying the care believers ought to take when passing a judgment upon their state godwards: *q. d.* Do not deceive yourselves; a partial change will not suffice to denominate a man to be in Christ Jesus: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Or else it comes in by way of admiration and astonishment, as in Rev. xxi. 5: "And he that sat thereon said, Behold, I make all things new," intimating the wonderful display which there is of the sovereign power and grace of God, in the renovation or new creation of a dead and self-destroyed sinner. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," &c.

No. 48.—Walker, with some slight alteration, on 2 Chron. v. 13, 14: "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make," &c.

The dedication of Solomon's temple was a period as memorable in the history of the Old Testament church as the day of Pentecost in that of the New. On the pentecostal day was exhibited one of the most striking displays of divine grace with which the Christian church has ever been favoured, when the Holy Ghost made a visible descent upon the apostles of our Lord, and imparted those miraculous gifts by which they were qualified to publish to all nations the glad tidings of divine mercy. The manifestation of divine grace recorded in our text is almost equally

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striking, and was certainly the brightest ever experienced under the Jewish dispensation. It is impossible to conceive the joy, the wonder, the ecstasy of these devout worshippers, when they beheld the cloud, that well-known symbol of the divine presence, and saw the temple filled with his glory. Solomon himself, as we learn from the eighteenth verse of the following chapter, was so overpowered with this extraordinary manifestation that he made a sudden pause, even after he had begun to pray; and, like one doubtful whether he should believe the testimony of his own senses, abruptly asks the question: "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have built!"

It appears, from the last chapter of the book of Exodus, that, when the tabernacle was first erected in the wilderness, God was pleased to take visible possession of it in a way *similar* to what is here recorded; and the effects (though not precisely the same) were very much akin to those I have now read to you; for we are there told that Moses, the man of God, was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord had filled the tabernacle: but here the cloud not only filled the tabernacle, but the whole temple; and the divine presence was displayed with such glory and majesty that the priests who burnt incense at the golden altar were obliged, at least for some time, to intermit the service. They could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.

It will be seen that each of the two paragraphs, in the foregoing example, affords a separate illustration of the use of our Topic, the former comparing the display of divine grace recorded in the text with the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; the latter comparing the principal facts recorded in the text with similar ones which are

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stated respecting the erection of the tabernacle. The following example is somewhat less direct, but still the principal thoughts appear to have been suggested by the Topic.

No. 49.—The same author, on 2 Cor. iv. 5: "We preach not ourselves," &c.

When God descended upon Mount Sinai, to give laws to his people Israel, the awful tokens of his presence, the thunderings and lightnings, the sound of the trumpet, and the smoking of the mountain, struck the whole camp with such consternation and dread that they were constrained to remove and stand afar off. They could not bear the exceeding lustre of his glory, notwithstanding the thick darkness with which it was veiled; and therefore addressed Moses in these remarkable words: "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." From which authentic piece of sacred history we may justly conclude that our nature is too weak, in its present state, to sustain an immediate intercourse with the Deity; for which cause God, in great condescension, is pleased to speak to us by men like ourselves; that, on the one hand, we may not want the benefit of his instruction, and, on the other hand, that we may not be overpowered by the too dazzling splendour and majesty of the teacher.

Under the old dispensation, besides the stated ministers of religion, God, "at sundry times," sent extraordinary messengers on special errands to the Jewish church; furnishing them with such credentials of their mission as were sufficient to convince that highly-favoured people that they came from God: and, consequently, that in every thing relative to their particular message, so attested, they were bound to hearken to them as unto God himself. For this under the gospel we have no warrant to look. But our Lord Jesus Christ, the great "apostle and high-priest of our profession," hath instituted the ordinance of a

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gospel ministry and committed to men the word of reconciliation, charging them to proclaim in the ears of their brethren "all the words of this life," which are already delivered in writing to the church; with a special promise that in the faithful discharge of this important trust "he will be with them always, even unto the end of the world."

The sermon to which this was prefixed was preached at the introduction of a minister to a charge, and surely nothing could be more appropriate to the purpose.

## XVII. Difference of words or actions on different occasions.

No. 50. Walker has an exordium formed as completely upon this Topic as though it were intended for the purpose of illustrating it, at the same time that it forms a most appropriate introduction to his discourse, which is founded on Hosea xiv. 8: "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?"

If we compare the representation here given of Ephraim with the account we have of him, chap. iv. 17, we shall discover such a wonderful change as must excite in us a desire to be acquainted with the cause of it. *There* it is said, "Ephraim is joined to his idols;" *here* we behold him throwing them away with every symptom of contempt and abhorrence. Like a man awakened from a dream, or rather like one who had lost his reason, and was now restored to the right use of it, he says, "What have I to do any more with idols?" It is my disgrace no less than my crime that ever I had any thing to do with such lying vanities; but now I cast them from me with scorn and detestation, and with a determined purpose that I shall never return to them any more. How is this surprising change to be accounted for? When God said, "Ephraim is joined to idols," he immediately pronounced that awful

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decree, " Let him alone!" Hereby a restraint was laid upon every outward instrument. All the creatures were charged by the highest authority to give him no disturbance in the course of his idolatry, but to leave him entirely to his own conduct, and the unabated influence of the idols he had chosen. By what means then was his recovery brought about? Had Ephraim the honour to discover the delusion by his own sagacity, and to break the enchantment by his own strength? We find an answer to these questions, chap. xiii. 9: " O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but *in me* is thy help." Had God said, *I* am determined to let Israel alone, there would have been an end of him at once, though the whole creation had been left at liberty to exert its utmost activity for his help; but it deserves our notice that though God laid a restraint upon the agency of the creatures, yet he laid no restraint upon his own, but reserves to himself the full exercise of his essential, unalienable prerogative, to be the free and sovereign disposer of his grace.

## XVIII. Contrast.

No. 51.—Blair, on James iii. 17: " The wisdom that is from above is—gentle."

To be wise in our own eyes, to be wise in the opinion of the world, and to be wise in the sight of God, are three things so very different as rarely to coincide. One may often be wise in his own eyes, who is far from being so in the judgment of the world; and to be reputed a prudent man by the world is no security for being accounted wise by God. As there is a worldly happiness, which God perceives to be no other than disguised misery—as there are worldly honours, which in his estimation are reproach—so there is a worldly wisdom, which in his sight is foolishness. Of this worldly wisdom the characters are given in the context, and placed in *contrast* with those of the

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wisdom which is from above. The one is the wisdom of the crafty; the other, that of the upright. The one terminates in selfishness; the other, in charity. The one is full of strife and bitter envyings; the other, of mercy and of good fruits. One of the chief characters by which the wisdom from above is distinguished is *gentleness*, of which I am now to discourse. Of this there is the greater occasion in discourse, because it is too seldom viewed in a religious light, and is more readily considered by the bulk of men as a mere felicity of nature, or an exterior accomplishment of manners, than as a Christian virtue which they are bound to cultivate. I shall first explain the nature of this virtue; and shall then offer some arguments to recommend, and some directions to facilitate, the practice of it.

No. 52.—The same author, when about to discourse on the subject of "Idleness," avails himself of this Topic in his exordium, by some very appropriate remarks on "Industry." Matt. xx. 6: "Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

It is an observation which naturally occurs, and has been often made, that all the representations of the Christian life in Scripture are taken from active scenes; from carrying on a warfare, running a race, striving to enter in at a strait gate; and, as in this context, labouring in a vineyard. Hence the conclusion plainly follows, that various active duties are required of the Christian; and that sloth and indolence are inconsistent with his hope of heaven. But it has been sometimes supposed that industry, as far as it is matter of duty, regards our spiritual concerns and employments only; and that one might be very busy as a Christian who was very idle as a man. The gospel, however, represents the religion of Christ as intended for the benefit of human society. It assumes men as engaged in the business of active life; and directs its exhortations,

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accordingly, to all ranks and stations; to the magistrate and the subject, to the master and the servant, to the rich and the poor, to them that buy and them that sell, them that *use* and them that *abuse* the world. This world, as the context represents it, is God's vineyard, where each of us has a task assigned him to perform. In every station, and at every period of life, labour is required. At the third, the sixth, or the eleventh hour, we are commanded to work, if we would not incur, from the great Lord of the vineyard, this reproof, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" We may, I confess, be busy about many things, and yet be found negligent of the "one thing needful." We may be very active, and, withal, very ill employed. But, though a person may be industrious without being religious, I must at the same time admonish you that no man can be idle without being sinful. In the sequel of this discourse I shall endeavour to show that the idle man is, in every view, both foolish and criminal; that he neither lives to God; nor lives to the world; nor lives to himself.

No. 53.—Walker furnishes a similar example on Luke xviii. 14: "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

As man fell by pride, it is reasonable to conclude that he can only rise again by humility; and here we are taught that this is the express ordination and appointment of Christ; for thus saith the faithful and true witness, "Every one that humbleth himself shall be exalted." I therefore intend to open to you the true nature of Christian humility.

No. 54.—South, on Job viii. 13: "The hypocrite's hope shall perish."

There is nothing in the world, though never so excellent, but it has its counterfeit; religion and grace itself, are not exempted: so that in these matters, as well as in others, we often suffer a fallacy in our choice, by embracing resemblances instead of things. *Sincerity* and *hypocrisy*

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are the two great things about which the whole stress and business of the gospel is laid out; namely, to persuade and enforce the one, and to discover and detect the other. And here we have hypocrisy presented in its greatest and most flourishing enjoyment, which is *hope;* and in its greatest misery, which is utter *frustration.*

No. 55.—As a further variety, in the application of this important Topic, I add an exordium of W. Draper's, on Matt. v. 4: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

How different this from the language of the world! Captivated by the short-lived mirth which the prophet compares with the crackling of thorns under a pot, they are ready to exclaim, Happy are the gay and cheerful! Eager in the pursuit of whatever elates the heart and delights the senses, they turn with disgust from the appearance of solemnity and gloom; and often look upon serious thought as the forerunner of melancholy, and melancholy as the completion of misery. But in the nature of things, and in the estimation of the wise, "the house of mourning (for a pilgrim in this world) is better than the house of feasting."

No. 56.—An example occurs in Cooke's Select Remains, which is so excellent that I shall quote it at some length, although the first sentence is all that properly belongs to the Topic—subject DYING DAILY; 1 Cor. xv. 31.

Nothing is more evident than that the generality of mortals care not how they *live,* which is an awful proof that they cannot bear to think that they shall *die.* Nay, to suggest an idea of death is sufficient to incur the name of *saint* in derision, or of a melancholy fool. Notwithstanding this, "there is a time to be *born,* and a time to *die;*" and a single moment beyond this fixed time "cannot pass." "Behold! (said God to his servant Moses) the day is come that thou must die!" From the sentence of God, and the daily execution of it, I am constrained to say to

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myself, "Behold! the days come (always coming!) that thou must die! And how do I know what that day will be? The day is as uncertain with me as it is certain with God. What can I do in this solemn uncertainty? Surely, as I know not which day, my interest is to be ready every day. This was the conduct of one of the wisest and best of men, the apostle Paul. Some might wonder at his mysterious conduct, of voluntary suffering for the truth's sake, and might be ready to suggest, "You will expose yourself to sufferings till it will be your death?" What then? "Death is no formidable object to me," saith he; No! "I protest, by your rejoicing, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily!" Think not that I fear to expose myself to sufferings and death for Christ's sake; for I assure you, the cause I am engaged in is so noble; the Lord, whose I am, and whom I serve, is so dear to me; and death is so familiar and interesting in its consequences to me, that "I die daily." Whatever I think to do in a dying hour, that I wish to do every day. I put myself in dying circumstances, and realize my departure, and try, daily try, to learn to die. That is,

I. I deposit my soul in Christ's hands daily. II. Attempt to resign all the interests of earth, III. Cultivate a daily superior regard to another world. IV. Daily realize death as a means of attaining the utmost of our wishes. V. Regard daily the state and frame of the soul.

### XIX. Grounds, &c.

This is a Topic which is available in exordiums in several forms, as the following examples, presenting four distinct varieties, will sufficiently illustrate:—

No. 57.—Jay takes up the grounds of the text itself in his Morning Exercises. 1 Kings xix. 13: "What doest thou here, Elijah?"

The grounds of this question did not lie in ignorance. God well knew how and why he came there. But he would

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know from Elijah himself, and therefore asks him,—that, being called upon to account for his conduct, he might be convinced, and be either speechless, or condemned out of his own mouth.

This opens to a beautiful division, in which the language of the text is considered:—

I. As an instance of God's moral observation of his creatures. II. As a reproof given to a good man. III. As a rule by which we may judge of ourselves.

No. 58.—Walker employs the Topic in a more general way, in reference to the grounds of the Christian's faith. Rom. v. 10: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

The grounds of a Christian's faith and hope are not only sufficient to satisfy his own mind, but capable likewise of being described and vindicated, in such a manner as cannot fail to give full satisfaction to every sober unprejudiced inquirer. Genuine Christianity is far from declining any means of trial, whereby truth is distinguished from delusion or imposture. On the contrary it courts the light; and, the more severely it is tried, the brighter it shines. The evidence by which our faith and hope are supported hath already stood the tests of many generations; and the most violent attacks of its enemies, instead of shaking the foundation, have only served to show that it is laid by that same almighty hand which created and upholdeth these heavens and this earth. The intelligent believer stands upon firm ground, and is always "ready to give an answer to every man that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him." Do you inquire into the *object* of his hopes, he will tell you, without hesitation, that he looks for a portion after death, in comparison whereof this earth is less than nothing and vanity. Do you inquire into the *grounds* of his hope, he hath an answer ready in the words of my text, &c.

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No. 59.—A different use is made of the Topic by the same author, on 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

The just conception and faithful discharge of the reciprocal duties in society are the foundation (or grounds) both of private and public happiness. In this respect the church of Christ is not different from other communities among men. Although Christians acknowledge but one supreme Master, yet they are taught to acknowledge among themselves subordinate degrees of authority on the one hand, and of submission and respect on the other. The God whom we serve is a God of order, not a God of confusion; and he hath pointed out, both in his word and in his providence, the necessity of doing all things decently and in good order. The text leads me to speak of the mutual regards and duties which ought to subsist between a minister of Christ and the people committed to his charge: in doing which I shall, through the divine assistance, I. Explain the account given us in the text of the nature of our office as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. II. Point out the corresponding obligations incumbent on Christians, with regard to those intrusted with this ministry.

No. 60.—Simeon takes up the grounds of that opposition to the gospel to which his text and the connexion referred. Rom. vi. 1—4: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin," &c.

We are told that the gospel was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; whilst to all who had an experience of it in their souls, it was both the power of God and the wisdom of God. The grounds on which the Jews and Greeks so greatly inveighed against it were various: its apparent contrariety to the revelation given by Moses rendered it offensive to the one; and its proposing to us a Saviour, who appeared unable to save

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himself, rendered it contemptible to the other. But there was one ground of offence which exposed it equally to the reprobation of all; and that was, the unfavourable aspect which it had in relation to holiness. Men of every religion were ready to cry out against it in this view; and therefore the apostle, having stated the plan of the gospel salvation with all possible clearness, takes up this objection, and gives an answer to it;—such an answer, indeed, as neither Jews nor Gentiles could have anticipated, but such as must approve itself to all whom God enables to comprehend it.

From the words of my text, I will take occasion to show, I. The supposed tendency of the gospel to encourage sin. II. The security it gives for the practice of universal holiness.

### XX. Remark the good and the bad, &c.

There are several passages of Scripture in discoursing upon which an exordium formed on this Topic would be peculiarly suitable. It has, however, been generally overlooked by authors; and, as I cannot find an appropriate example, I must endeavour to make one, which, in addition to what I have said in my Lecture upon this Topic, will, I hope, be sufficient to induce you to employ it when it may furnish any suitable and profitable remarks.

No. 61.—Take Matt. xxvi. 35: "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee."

These words exhibit the apostle Peter under a highly interesting and instructive aspect. What Christian mind can contemplate the feelings here indicated without perceiving much to admire, and at the same time something to lament? Do we not here see a faithful and vivid representation of the youthful disciple of Christ, who, like the inexperienced but ardent adventurer in worldly business, frequently displays a zeal and an activity highly commendable, but fails through a similar rashness to that which is

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so often fatal to successful enterprise? Peter was no doubt sincere and ardent, but, little acquainted with the deceitfulness of his own heart, his confidence was presumptuous and delusive, and in the hour of temptation he became an easy prey. Our Lord, "in whom dwelt all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," saw with approbation the *zeal* of Peter, while he warned him of the consequences of his *temerity*, &c.

### XXI. Suppose things.

Authors and preachers of a lively imagination very frequently resort to this and a few other Topics of an inventive character. The following examples will be sufficient to give a just idea of the use of this Topic in exordiums:—

No. 62.—R. Robinson furnishes a very striking example.

Before I read my text, give me leave to open my heart to you. As I was coming hither this evening, and meditating on my text, I thought, *suppose*—instead of going alone into the assembly this evening, as I shall,—suppose it were possible for me to have the honour of leading by the hand, through this numerous congregation up to the place of speaking, the Lord Jesus Christ in his own person, "the first-born of every creature, the image of the invisible God." Suppose I should then open the twenty-second chapter of Matthew, and, with a clear and distinct voice, summon each of my hearers to give an answer to the questions in the forty-second verse—"*What think ye of Christ?* whose son is he?" Affection for you set me a thinking, further, on such answers as the most strict attention to truth would compel you to give. I thought, suppose one should say, "I have never thought about Christ; I never intend to think about him." Suppose a second should say, "I have never thought of him, and I despise him, because he is not a *minister of sin*." And suppose a third should say, "I hate him; and as it is



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not in my power to persecute him, I express my hatred of him by ridiculing and tormenting all who respect and resemble him."

My brethren, it is not for me to pretend to know your hearts, or to pronounce any thing certain; but the bare apprehension of such dispositions excited in me, as it must in every one that loves his neighbour as himself, a thousand suspicions and fears.

Dreading such answers as these, I thought again, what if I should bend my knee to the insulted Friend of Sinners, and humbly ask, "O Son of David! what think you of this people? whose children are they?" Alas! I thought I saw him "*look* round about on you with anger, being grieved for the hardness of your hearts;" then turning about, melting with compassion, going down the steps, walking slowly out of the assembly, and all the way weeping and saying, "O that thou hadst known, even thou," the most inveterate of this congregation, "at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes."

No. 63.—Lavington, vol. i., p. 236, on Heb. xiii. 17: "For they watch for your souls."

The very mention of a future judgment excites attention. Should the heavens open, and the transactions of that day immediately commence—the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, attended by thousands of angels and ten thousand of his saints; were the throne erected, and the Judge in awful majesty seated thereon; and should our names be among the first that were called upon to give an account of our stewardship; and, among other things, should the improvement of the present opportunity be particularly inquired into (as it certainly will); what account would you wish to give of it? Under these impressions I now claim your attention, &c.

No. 64.—Idem, somewhat altered, vol. ii., p. 456. Prov. xxiii. 26: "My son, give me thine heart."

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I have been endeavouring to imagine what were the first thoughts that occurred to you upon the mention of this text. Some thought one thing and some another, no doubt. Shall I hazard a conjecture upon this matter? Why then, I believe that some, when the text was first read, thought, "This is a very suitable text for the occasion: never considering that the text is a direct address that they should surrender their hearts. Others, perhaps, when they heard God say, "My son, give me thine heart," thought, "No, I cannot; my heart is engaged already. I cannot be religious, not I. What? give up all my merry companions, and be always reading, and hearing, and praying? Whatever I may do when I become old, I can by no means surrender at present." Others may say, "O that God had my poor heart—I do wish it; but such is the conflict within that nothing but an increase of divine grace can enable me to surrender it." But some, I have no doubt, are saying or crying out, with admiration and gratitude, "*My* heart—*my* heart! wilt thou vouchsafe to accept *my* heart? Here it is, take it; if I had ten thousand hearts thou shouldst have them all.

No. 65.—The same author, vol. i., p. 264. 2 Pet. iii. 18: "But grow in grace."

Suppose I could lead you to the rich mines of Mexico or Potosi, and show you the heaps of gold and silver which they afford. If I could tell you that you might take what you would, do you suppose that you should be content with looking at those heaps and admiring them; and, after all, bringing nothing away? No, you would carry away as much as you could, and envy your stronger neighbours who brought home more than yourselves. Yet I come, sabbath after sabbath, and set before you the treasures of grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and offer any of them, all of them to you, without money or price; the smallest of these spiritual benefits is of more real value than a house full of silver and gold; but I bring them out



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and carry them home again and again, and that to no purpose. Do you think the charge too severe? Tell me, and make me happy; tell me that I am deceived, and that you not only have grace, but that you are sincerely desirous of growing in grace, of being filled with the fruits of righteousness.

No. 66.—Beveridge, vol. x., p. 154. Matt. xviii. 20: "Where two or three are gathered together," &c.

If our blessed Saviour was upon earth now, what flocking would there be from all parts to hear him and see him. And if he were but in any part of the kingdom, how remote soever, which of us but should strive to go to him, what haste we should make, what pains we should take to get as near him as possible, to hear some of his divine discourses from his own mouth! with what reverence should we approach him! how attentively should we listen! But how rejoiced if we saw him smiling upon us, owning us for his servants and disciples! Should we not say, "It is good for us to be here?" This may be thought a vain supposition, and so it is as to his bodily presence; but yet there is a way whereby we may meet with our blessed Saviour every day in the year, and enjoy his presence as effectually as if he now dwelt among us. Witness Matt. xxviii. 20: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;" and the words of our text," "Where two or three are gathered together in my name," &c.

Now these are very striking passages, it must be acknowledged; but let it be noted that striking commencements must not be followed by dull discourses. These things can only be attempted when the mind is in a lively frame, when capable of supporting such a beginning.

No. 67.—I add one example of a more simple character from the Preacher, vol. v., p. 93. Ps. lxxiii. 24: "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

Suppose a traveller had lost his way, and some kind

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friend had found him amidst dangers, and set him right; he would be anxious for his assistance and direction during the remainder of his journey. The writer of this psalm had sadly erred, and gone out of his way. The counsel of God had been the means of bringing him back, and setting him right: he therefore now resolves to give himself up to it all the future part of his life, in the fullest confidence that it would lead him right, and land him safe at last.

### XXII. Guard against objections.

The exordium of a discourse will most frequently be the proper place for the introduction of this Topic when it requires to be noticed; but I would again caution the student against employing it merely as a Topic for declamation. The following examples are worthy of imitation:—

No. 68.—Sherlock, vol. i., p. 327. Acts x. 34, 35 "God is no respecter of persons."

These words, if not carefully attended to, may seem to carry a sense contrary to the meaning of the apostle in delivering them. St. Peter in the text declares that God, without respect to any national or personal privileges, was ready to admit all people into the covenant made with Jesus Christ, provided they were duly prepared for such admission. Some from his words have falsely concluded that there is no necessity of becoming disciples of Christ, but that it is sufficient if we live according to the principles and light of nature; forasmuch as every one that feareth God, &c., is accepted of him.

No. 69.—Mr. Simeon, in an indirect but very efficient manner, guards against the objections which are made to the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, and thus prepares his hearers to enter with greater candour into his subject, which is founded on Mark xvi. 15, 16: "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," &c.

It is to be lamented, that an unhappy prejudice subsists

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in the Christian world against the peculiar and most essential doctrines of our holy religion; and that while ministers defend, with zeal and ability, the outworks of Christianity, they are at little pains to lead their hearers within the veil, and to unfold to them those blessed truths whereupon their salvation depends. Under the idea that moral discourses are more accommodated to the comprehensions of men, and more influential on their practice, they wave all mention of the sublime mysteries of the gospel, and inculcate little more than a system of heathen ethics. They would be ashamed and almost afraid to make such a passage as this the ground-work of their discourse, lest they should be thought to be contending for some unimportant tenets instead of promoting piety and virtue. But can any one read such a solemn declaration as that of the text, and account it unworthy of his notice? Can any one consider the circumstances under which it was uttered, or the authoritative manner in which the apostles were commanded to publish it to the whole world, and yet think himself at liberty to disregard it? Shall it be suspected to be only the *shibboleth* of a party? Let us put away such unbecoming jealousies, and enter in a fair and candid manner into the investigation of the words before us: let us consider that they were among the last words of our Lord while sojourning on earth; that they contain his final commission to his apostles, and in them to all succeeding pastors of his church; that they are distinguished by our Lord himself by the honourable appellation, "the gospel" or glad tidings; and that they were delivered by him, not only as the rule of our faith, but as the rule of procedure in the day of judgment. Let us, I say, consider the words in this view, and with hearts duly impressed attend, while we explain the import, vindicate the reasonableness, and display the excellency, of this divine message.

No. 70.—The same author. Mark ii. 17: "The whole need not a physician," &c.

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There is no action, however benevolent, which cavillers may not censure. Every part of our Lord's conduct was worthy of his divine character; yet he constantly endured the contradiction of sinners, &c. He was now conversing familiarly with publicans for their good. This was condemned by the scribes as unbecoming a holy person, if not also giving countenance to sin. Our Lord vindicated himself on principles which they could not but acknowledge to be correct, &c.

No. 71.—The same. 1 Tim. iii. 16: "Great is the mystery of godliness," &c.

It has been often said by infidels, that "where mystery begins, religion ends." But if this were true, there would be no uniformity or consistency in the works of God. All his works, both of creation and providence, are full of mysteries; there is not any one substance of which we know *all* its properties, or any one event for which we can assign *all* the reasons. If there were nothing in religion above the comprehension of man, it would afford a strong presumption that our religion was not from heaven; for why should it be revealed if man could have devised it without a revelation? But the inspired writers represent the gospel as "the wisdom of God in a mystery," as a "mystery hid from ages," and "kept secret from the foundation of the world." They speak of many of its fundamental doctrines as a mystery—"a great mystery"—a glorious mystery; and of its ministers as the stewards of the mysteries of God. In the words before us, many of the principal events relating to Christ and the establishment of his religion in the world are enumerated, and confessedly declared to be a great mystery. Let us then contemplate them in their order, &c.

No, 72.—The same author, on Luke xxii. 22: "Truly the Son of man goeth as it is written," &c.

The doctrine of predestination is very mysterious. If it be so held as to destroy the free agency of man, it must be

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pernicious and false. But it cannot be denied without denying the omniscience and immutability of God. Nor, if properly understood, is it at all inconsistent with the responsibility of man. If we know not how to reconcile all its difficulties, it is not *therefore* false. Certain it is that Judas was removed to his own place. Nor can we doubt but the Judge of all the earth will do right; yet his sin was among the things which had been fore-ordained. So also was the death of Christ, and every particular respecting it.

These are excellent commencements, and on some occasions very proper. They were peculiarly proper in Mr. Simeon, who stood high and still stands high in one of our universities where the mysteries of the gospel were not favourite topics.

No. 73.—I add a specimen of a still more general kind from Farquhar, on 1 Thess. v. 16: "Rejoice evermore."

Many ill-disposed persons consider religion as the cause of a severe, gloomy, and unsociable disposition; and some of the friends of religion do not quite escape this observation. Nothing, however, can be more unjust than such a judgment, or productive of worse effects.

### XXIII. Consider characters of majesty, &c.

In other words, see if there be any thing worthy of remark in the prevailing quality of the text or subject.

Instances of the use of this Topic in exordiums might be adduced to an almost unlimited extent, but I must here confine myself to the exemplification of a few only of its numerous varieties.

No. 74.—Mr. Simeon seems to have had this Topic in view when composing the exordium of his discourse on John i. 1: "In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

What astonishing majesty and dignity are displayed in these brief but comprehensive words! The other evan-

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gelists commence their histories at the period of our Saviour's incarnation: but St. John carries us back to eternity itself; and informs us, not only what Christ did and suffered, but who he was. He calls him by a very peculiar name: "The Word;" and, in other places, "The Word of Life;" "The Word of God." This name, as applicable to the Messiah, was not altogether unknown to the Jews; and it seems peculiarly proper to the Son, because it is by the Son that God has in all ages revealed his mind to man. And perhaps this very explanation of the term was intended to be conveyed to us by St. John, when he says, within a few verses after my text, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

But let us consider, I. The testimony here given to the Lord Jesus Christ. II. The deep interest we have in it.

No. 75.—Mr. J. Hill furnishes an excellent example on Heb. xii. 23: "And to God the Judge of all."

These words at first reading strike terror. It is an awful thing for a sinful creature to appear before God the Judge of all; but in Christ Jesus this God is a reconciled God, and so is the justifier of all them that believe. Thus considered they speak comfort: with this view our apostle mentions them in the text, as bearing a large share in those special privileges unto which the saints under the New Testament are admitted; and with this view I have read them for the subject of your present meditations.

The two foregoing examples mark the character of *majesty*, as exhibited in their respective texts; the two following are on the *necessity* of the course required in the text, which is a far more common and certainly not less important consideration.

No. 76.—Simeon, on Luke xii. 47, 48: "That servant who knew his lord's will," &c.

If there be much spoken in Scripture concerning the necessity of faith in Christ, so is there much spoken, also,



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concerning the necessity of obedience to him. The two are never to be separated: they are indissolubly connected together in God's purpose, and must be also in our attainments: they are the root and the fruit, or the foundation and the superstructure. The necessity of good works is marked with peculiar force in the words before us; wherein our Lord makes known to us, I. The ground and measure of our responsibility to God. II. The rule of God's procedure towards us in the day of judgment.

No. 77.—The same author, on John viii. 24: "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

The necessity of faith in Christ in order to salvation is not to be considered as a merely arbitrary appointment: it arises out of the very state into which mankind are fallen; a state in which it would be impossible for them to enjoy God, even if they were admitted into his immediate presence. They are at present laden and defiled with sin; and could derive no comfort from the sight of a holy God. Their iniquities would for ever render them odious in his eyes, and him terrible in theirs. They must be cleansed from their sins, before they can hold any communion with him as a father and a friend. But they can never wash away their own sins; nor find any other means of expiation besides that which God has ordained, even the blood of his only dear Son. Nor is there any way in which they can be interested in Christ but by believing in him.

The *utility* of any subject, or the advantages arising from the course recommended, may also be noticed in an exordium when not required in the discussion.

No. 78.—Blair, on Ps. xv. 5: "He that doeth these things shall never be moved."

Tranquillity of mind, or, in the words of the text, a mind not moved or disquieted by the accidents of life, is undoubtedly one of the greatest blessings that we can possess on earth. It is indeed the ultimate aim to which the wishes of the wise and reflecting have ever been directed,

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that, with a mind undisturbed by anxieties, cares, and fears, they might pass their days in a pleasing serenity. They justly concluded that, by enjoying themselves in peace, they would enjoy, to the greatest advantage, all the comforts of life that came within their reach. This happy tranquillity the multitude conceive to be most readily attainable by means of wealth, which they imagine would set them above all the ordinary disturbances of life. That it has some effect for this purpose cannot be denied. At the same time I must observe that the attainment of opulence is no certain method of obtaining tranquillity. Nay, the higher that men rise in the world—the greater degrees of power and distinction which they acquire—the farther they are often removed from internal peace.

Assuming it, therefore, for an undoubted truth, that the mere possession of the goods of fortune may be consistent with the want of inward tranquillity, we must look around for other more certain grounds of it. We must inquire whether any line of conduct can be pointed out which, independent of external situation in the world, shall tend to make us easy in mind; shall either bestow or aid that tranquillity which all men desire.

An example in which the *fidelity* of Scripture history is marked with great propriety, shall conclude on this Topic.

No. 79.—Simeon, on Gen. xx. 9: "Then Abimelech said unto Abraham, What hast thou done unto us?" &c.

We admire the fidelity of Scripture history. There is not a saint, however eminent, but his faults are reported as faithfully as his virtues. And we are constrained to acknowledge that the best of men, when they come into temptation, are weak and fallible as others if they be not succoured from above. We are habituated to behold Abraham as a burning and shining light, but now we are called to view him under an eclipse. We see the father of the faithful drawing upon himself a just rebuke, and that, too,

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not for some slight defect in his obedience, but for a great and heinous transgression.

### XXIV. Remark degrees.

This Topic may occasionally be used as an exordium in something like the following manner:—

No. 80. "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;" 2 Tim. ii. 1.

It is possible to have the grace of Christ, and not be strong in it. The reality is one thing; the degree is another. We read of weak faith as well as of strong faith. There are lambs in our Shepherd's fold, as well as sheep; and in our Father's house there are little children as well as young men. But, while there is in religion an infancy that is natural and lovely, there is another which is unlooked for and offensive. It is the effect of relapse. It is not of the beginning of the divine life, but of an after period, that the apostle speaks when, reproving the Hebrews, he says, "Ye are *become* such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." The Saviour himself does "not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;" but he is concerned to "bring forth judgment unto victory." And, while they are to be comforted, the slothful are to be stimulated, and all are to be kept from settling upon their lees.

### XXV. Observe different interests.

Some discourses might certainly commence with great propriety by remarks on the manner in which the subject bears on the interests of individuals or communities; but I have not discovered any good example of this kind, and as the Topic is sufficiently illustrated by Claude, I shall not attempt to offer any example of my own, but commend the *unbeaten* path (so far as exordiums are concerned) to the student, merely adding, that the historical parts of

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Scripture afford many suitable openings, as the sacrifice of Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 36, &c., in which the different interests of Baal and his worshippers, and of God and his servants, were concerned. For the different interests which men *feel* in any subject, I must refer you to the examples given under the twenty-first Topic.

### XXVI. Distinguish, &c.

No. 81.—Take 1 John v. 13: "These things have I written unto you that believe, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

As the want of rightly distinguishing between the Scripture doctrine of faith in Christ, and an assurance of personal interest in him, has given rise to much needless and unprofitable discussion, and been the occasion of much mischief among the professors of the gospel,—it is highly important that we should seek to possess clear and explicit ideas upon the subject. It is obvious that in the passage now before us the apostle distinguishes between believing on the Son of God, and knowing that we have eternal life. Saving faith therefore does not consist in knowing or being assured of our interest in Christ, though it may be accompanied with such an assurance. The latter is the fruit or effect of faith, and should not be confounded with it. The apostle also makes a difference between our first trusting in Christ, and our subsequent believing on his name. The former refers to the period of our conversion, when we first came to him for salvation; the latter, to a life of communion with him, and of dependance upon him.

### XXVII. Compare the different parts of the text together.

This may sometimes suggest a very edifying exordium,

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as will be seen by the following examples, with which I must close my Lecture.

No. 82.—The Preacher, vol. vii., p. 145, on Prov. xi. 30: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he that winneth souls is wise."

The two parts of this text serve to explain each other. The first is general, and denotes that a righteous man is a blessing to those about him. The last is more particular, teaching us that a good man is in many instances the means of winning souls to God, and to the love of true religion; and that where this is the case it is the sign of heavenly wisdom. The imagery of the text is probably taken from the tree of life in paradise, to which Christ himself is compared, Rev. ii. 7; and in a subordinate sense his people are represented under the same figure. Two remarks will tend to illustrate and confirm the truth taught us in the text: I. That good men in general are a blessing to those about them: "their fruit is like that of the tree of life." II. They are in many cases instrumental in "winning souls" to God, and so prove themselves to be truly "wise."

No. 83.—Walker, on 2 Cor. v. 1: "For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

In the former part of this verse, the apostle compares the body to an earthly house, yea, to a tabernacle or tent, which is still less durable, and more easily taken down, and therefore the dissolution of such a frail thing ought not to be reckoned a very great calamity. In the latter clause he exhibits the glorious object of the Christian hope, which he calls "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." At the same time he expresses the firm persuasion which he had, in common with all true Christians, of being admitted into that glorious and permanent habitation as soon as the

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earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved: "We know." He does not say we think or we hope so, but we are assured of it; we are as firmly persuaded that this shall be our lot as if we were already entered upon the possession of it. In handling this important branch of the subject, I propose, through divine aid, I. To describe the persons for whom this blessing of God is prepared. II. To inquire how, or by what means, they come to know that they shall certainly possess it.

Thus then we have seen that Claude's Topics (either intentionally or otherwise) have been made the ground-work of exordiums by preachers of distinguished eminence and ability; and it remains to be proved, by those who despise their aid, that a familiar acquaintance with these sources of reflection can render the Topics themselves less applicable and appropriate, or diminish the value of any composition into which they are introduced. In my next Lecture I shall bring before you a few more examples of exordiums which may serve to suggest a further variety, and shall then dismiss the subject.

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# LECTURE XXXIII.

## EXTRA TOPICAL EXORDIUMS.—PART III.

We come now to consider, as proposed, a few extra Topics which may furnish suitable remarks for exordiums. Some of these might have been included as subdivisions under Claude's Topics; but upon the whole, I imagine, they will not be thought unworthy of the distinct place I have allotted to them.

### XXVIII. The importance of a subject, &c.

The importance of any subject is a Topic, a brief but forcible exhibition of which, in an exordium, will tend, under the divine blessing, to secure that attention from your hearers which the subject may demand. That such a preparation is necessary I need not attempt to prove; for though men will readily acknowledge that the subjects which as ministers of Christ it is your duty to bring before them, possess claims on their attention with which no other class of subjects is invested, yet it is but too evident that these *acknowledged* claims are very generally disregarded, and those subjects which are the most important are likewise the most neglected. The following examples are well worthy of your attention.

No. 84.—Blair, on Prov. iv. 23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

Among the many wise counsels given by this inspired

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writer, there is none which deserves greater regard than that contained in the text. Its *importance,* however, is too seldom perceived by the generality of men. They are apt to consider the regulation of external conduct as the chief object of religion. If they can act their part with decency, and maintain a fair character, they conceive their duty to be fulfilled. What passes in the mean time within their mind they suppose to be of no great consequence, either to themselves or to the world. In opposition to this dangerous plan of morality, the wise man exhorts us to "keep the heart;" that is, to attend, not only to our actions, but to our thoughts and desires; and to "keep the heart with all diligence," that is, with sedulous and unremitting care; for which he assigns this reason, that "out of the heart are the issues of life."

No. 85.—The same author, on 1 Cor. vii. 31: "The fashion of this world passeth away."

To use this world so as not to abuse it, is one of the most *important* and at the same time one of the most difficult lessons which religion teaches us. By so many desires and passions are we connected with the objects around us, that our attachment to them is always in hazard of becoming excessive and sinful. Hence religion is so often employed in moderating this attachment, by rectifying our erroneous opinions, and instructing us in the proper value we ought to set on worldly things. Such was the particular scope of the apostle in this context.

No. 86.—Simeon, on Rom. viii. 13: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die," &c.

It is of infinite *importance* to know our state as it is before God, and to ascertain, on scriptural grounds, what our condition will be in the eternal world. Numberless are the passages of God's word which will afford us the desired information. But there is not in the whole inspired volume one declaration more explicit than that before us. It presents to our view two momentous truths, which, as

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they admit not of any clearer division or arrangement, we shall consider in their order.

These are very clear examples in their kind. They are somewhat short; but it remains with the good sense of the preacher to fix the proper length. Where he apprehends the people want stirring up to the subject—as the importance of a just observance of the sabbath, where it is scandalously disregarded—this point must be enlarged on; in other cases much enlargement may not be required.

XXIX. PROPRIETY OF AN EXPRESSION, &c.

No. 87.—Take Ps. lxxiii. 28: "It is good for me to draw near to God."

The text is a broad unqualified assertion, and it remains to be proved by a reference to the experience of the pious whether there be not something in religious services which can with *propriety* be denominated a drawing near to God, or whether the idea originates in enthusiasm, in a too bold intrusion into the divine presence, an unwarrantable familiarity, &c.

The following is on the propriety of the appeal contained in the text, where it is shown that it is fit and right that we should attend to the requisition, &c.

No. 88.—Simeon, on 1 Chron. xxix. 5: "Who then is willing to consecrate his service unto the Lord?"

That the God of heaven and earth possesses a claim to the services of his creatures, is a truth which reason itself inculcates. The acknowledgment of this claim is even enforced upon us by the brute creation! "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib;" much more then should we consider our obligation to Him who has nourished us, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." But how are all divine claims magnified when we reflect on the inestimable blessings conveyed to us in the work of redemption! "What should we render to the Lord for all his benefits?" Is it not our "reasonable ser-

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vice" that we should present our bodies and souls a living and holy sacrifice unto Him who hath bought us with his blood?" Such indeed is the blindness and obduracy of the heart, that even the wonders of redemption prove too often ineffectual to excite in us a spirit of love and gratitude towards the Redeemer. Yet certainly the anxious inquiry of the true Christian is this, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? and, under a lively impression of the unmerited goodness of God, he considers himself, not as his own, but the Lord's, and glorifies God with his body and spirit which are God's. But if the current of our affections do not move in this direction, if the habit of our lives be not governed by this principle, our real character is at variance with our name and profession.

No. 89.—Lavington, vol. i., p. 419, on Deut. xxxii. 29: "Oh that they were wise," &c. Here the exordium turns on the propriety of treating about death.

If when mankind quitted this world they were never to appear in another, there would be an evident impropriety in attempting to fix their minds on a subject so unwelcome as death; and, as we should feel no alarm or anxiety on account of the careless conduct of sinners, we might let them eat, drink, and be merry, and not disturb them with gloomy and groundless apprehensions of futurity. But we know that "it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death there is a judgment;" and we are assured that "all who are in the grave, or in the sea, shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation." If therefore we are not connected by blood or friendship with those dying immortals, as I may call them, surely common humanity would engage us to warn all within our reach of the impending destruction; and where we could do no more we should sigh and say, "Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end," &c.

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## XXX. The occasion of a word or action.

No. 90.—The Preacher, vol. v., p. 88, on Ps. li. 15: "O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise."

The force and beauty of many passages of Scripture arise from the *occasion* on which they were delivered. Such language as that before us, if viewed out of its connexion, would appear to convey the idea only of a desire to enjoy freedom in prayer and praise. But, considered as a part of this penitential psalm, it implies much more, and acquires additional force and interest. It implies that sin had shut the mouth of the penitent, and he knew not how to open it; but that if God would pardon his iniquity, that would open it, and then his lips should ever be employed in praise.

No. 21.—Blair, on John xiii. 7: "Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

These words of our Lord were *occasioned* by a circumstance in his behaviour which seemed mysterious to his disciples. When about to celebrate his last passover, he meant to give them an instructive lesson of condescension and humility. The mode which he chose for delivering this instruction was the emblematical action of washing their feet. When Simon Peter saw his Master addressing himself to the performance of so menial an office, he exclaims, with the greatest surprise, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Our Lord replies in the words of the text, "What I do, thou knowest now; but thou shalt know hereafter." "My behaviour, in this instance, may seem unaccountable to you at present; but you shall afterwards receive a satisfactory explanation of the intent of that symbol which I now employ."

The expressions of a Divine Person on this *occasion* can very naturally and properly be applied to various

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instances where the conduct of Providence, in the administration of human affairs, remains dark and mysterious to us. "What I do thou knowest not now." We must for a while be kept in ignorance of the designs of Heaven. But this ignorance, though necessary at present, is not always to continue. A time shall come when a commentary shall be afforded on all that is now obscure; when the veil of mystery shall be removed, and full satisfaction be given to every rational mind. "Thou shalt know hereafter." This is the doctrine which I propose to illustrate in the following discourse.

The two following examples might have been given under the eighth Topic, but I have preferred placing them under this head, because I imagine that it may assist in securing variety.

No. 92.—Blair, on John xvii. 1: "Jesus lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come," &c.

These were the words of our blessed Lord on a memorable *occasion*. The feast of the passover drew nigh, at which he knew that he was to suffer. The night was arrived wherein he was to be delivered into the hands of his enemies. He had spent the evening in conference with his disciples, like a dying father in the midst of his family, mingling consolations with his last instructions. When he had ended his discourse to them, "he lifted up his eyes to heaven," and, with the words which I have now read, began that solemn prayer of intercession for the church which closed his ministry.

No. 93.—Jay, on John xvii. 15: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world," &c.

These words were spoken by our Saviour on a very memorable *occasion*—an "hour" unparalleled in the annals of time. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." While he was with them he had withheld no proof of his kindness and care. He gave them free access to his presence, he removed their

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doubts, he relieved their complaints, he bore with their infirmities. Such an intercourse of sacred friendship had endeared him to their affections, and rendered the prospect of separation inexpressibly painful. When the venerable Samuel died, "all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him." The case of the disciples was more peculiarly afflictive; and "sorrow filled their hearts." Our Saviour was never deprived of self-possession; in every state he had the full command of his powers; and, even in the immediate view of his tremendous sufferings, he does not forget one circumstance which claims his attention. He thinks more of his disciples than of himself; he enters into their feelings—they were to remain behind, poor and despised; "as sheep among wolves;" as passengers in a vessel "tossed by the waves"—he will not leave them "comfortless"—on the evening before his crucifixion, and a few moments before his agony, by the gate of the garden of Gethsemane, surrounded with his family, "he lifts up his eyes to heaven," and commends them into the hands of his "Father and our Father, his God and our God."

Many very excellent sermons are introduced by

### XXXI. A DIRECT COMMENT UPON THE TEXT.

No. 94.—Blair, on Eccles. xii. 5: "Man goeth to his long home," &c.

This is a sight which incessantly presents itself. Our eyes are so much accustomed to it that it hardly makes any impression. Throughout every season of the year, and during the course of almost every day, the funerals which pass along the streets show us man going to his long home. Were death a rare and uncommon object—were it only once in the course of a man's life that he beheld one of his fellow-creatures carried to the grave—a solemn awe would fill him; he would stop short in the midst of his pleasures; he would even be chilled with secret

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horror. Such impressions, however, would prove unsuitable to the nature of our present state, and it is better ordered by the wisdom of Providence that they should be weakened by the frequency of their recurrence. Yet, familiar as death is now become, it is undoubtedly fit that by an event of so important a nature some impression should be made upon our minds. It ought not to pass over as one of those common incidents which are beheld without concern, and awaken no reflection.

In discoursing from these words I am to consider death as one of the most frequent and considerable events that happen in the course of human affairs; and to show in what manner we ought to be affected, first, by the death of strangers or indifferent persons; secondly, by the death of friends; and thirdly, by the death of enemies.

XXXII. A CRITICAL OR HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATION will sometimes be suitable.

No. 95.—The Preacher, vol. ii., p. 174, on John xx. 11, 12: "And, as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre," &c.

Modern travellers who have visited Jerusalem describe the holy sepulchre, hewn out of a rock, as being small and low, not more than eight feet square, with a contracted entrance, and several steps descending into it; which accounts for the position which Mary occupied, "stooping down and looking in." Scarcely believing it possible that the tomb should be deserted, she pried with eager curiosity, as the day dawned upon the sacred spot. Let us, I. Try to gather a little instruction from her example. II. Consider the encouragement arising from her success.

XXXIII. THE LITERAL SENSE OF THE TEXT.

No. 96.—Blair, on Psa. xvi. 11: "Thou wilt show me the path of life," &c.

The apostle Peter, in a discourse which he delivered to the

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Jews, applied this passage in a mystical and prophetical sense to the Messiah, Acts ii. 25—28. But, in its *literal* and *primitive* meaning, it expresses the exalted hopes by which the psalmist David supported himself amidst the changes and revolutions of which his life was full. By these hopes, when flying before Saul, when driven from his throne, and persecuted by an unnatural son, he was enabled to preserve his virtue, and to maintain unshaken trust in God. In that early age of the world those explicit discoveries of a state of immortality which we enjoy, had not yet been given to mankind. But, though the Sun of Righteousness was not arisen, the dawn had appeared of that glorious day which he was to introduce. We shall consider, 1. The hope of the psalmist in his present state: "Thou wilt show me the path of life." II. The termination of his hope in that future state where "in the presence of God is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

The literal and primitive meaning ought always to be noticed in an exordium, when your discourse turns upon an accommodation of any passage to ideas which it was not intended by the writer to convey; for here the passage of Scripture is in fact neither a *proof* of the justness of the sentiments advanced, nor properly a foundation for them, but is rather to be considered as a motto, though as such it may be very appropriate.

No. 97.—Simeon, on Ezek. viii. 15: "Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man?" &c.

Man is ready to complain of God's judgments, as though they were unmerited or severe. But "God will be justified in his sayings, and will overcome when he is judged." The captives in Babylon thought that God had dealt hardly with them. God therefore gave to the prophet Ezekiel, who was among the captives there, a vision of what was at that very time transacting in the temple at Jerusalem, notwithstanding the judgments that had been inflicted on

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them. It was on account of their idolatries that God had given them over into the hands of the Chaldeans: yet was idolatry practised at Jerusalem in all its most hateful and abominable forms, even by the priests and elders, who ought to have exerted their authority to repress it. They laboured, indeed, to conceal their impiety from common observation; and therefore they built a wall to obstruct the common entrance into the place where they assembled: but the prophet, in his vision, "spied a hole in the wall," which he was directed to enlarge, so as to get access to "the door;" and then, on entering in at the door, "he saw every form of creeping things and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about," and seventy elders, with Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan at their head, offering clouds of incense to them. Being directed then to go to another part of the temple, he saw "still greater abominations," even a multitude of "women sitting, weeping for Tammuz," some deified monster of iniquity. Then, in the passage which I have read he was told that, on going to another part of the temple, he should "see greater abominations still." Accordingly, he went into the inner court of the temple, and there saw "about five-and-twenty men, with their backs towards" that part of the temple where the holy of holies was, and which was the more immediate residence of the Deity, and worshipping "the sun towards the east." The Lord then appeals to the prophet, whether there was not abundant reason for the judgments which he had inflicted on the nation; and declares his determination to chastise them with yet greater severity.

In its primary sense, this passage doubtless refers only to the Jews; and to them only at the period here specified. But when we consider that the deportation of the Jewish people into captivity, their subsequent deliverance from that captivity, and their restoration to their own land, were all typical of what yet passes in the world, and in



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the church, and in the heart, we feel authorized so far to accommodate the words of our text to existing circumstances as to take occasion from them to point out the hidden abominations which may be discovered from a closer inspection of, I. The world. II. The church. III. The heart.

Thus have I endeavoured to exemplify the chief sources of reflection. Let the student make himself familiarly acquainted with all these, and he need never be at a loss for suitable remarks with which to commence his discourses; and, besides the diversity of Topics, the manner in which they are employed may be so varied that, even where the Topics are the same, they may preserve all the freshness of novelty. For example, instead of making any Topic the matter of positive statement or assertion, it will sometimes have a better effect to introduce it as involving a *generally admitted truth.*

No. 98.—Simeon, on Isa. v. 20: "Woe to them who call evil good," &c.

That man in his present state is a corrupt and sinful creature, is *too plain to be denied.* The whole tenour of his conduct proves it beyond a doubt. But the generality give themselves credit for meaning well at the very time that they are doing ill. In this, however, they are mistaken. There is in all a far greater consciousness of the evil of their conduct than they are willing to allow. But they wish to quiet their own minds, and to approve themselves to the world; and therefore they change the name of things, calling "good evil, and evil good, putting light for darkness, and darkness for light, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." By these means they succeed in allaying their own fears, and so recommend themselves to each other. But their guilt before God is hereby increased; for our Lord says, "*This is the condemnation,* that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." There is in their

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hearts a rooted aversion to what is good, and a consequent determination to decry it. There is also an inveterate love of evil, and a consequent desire to justify it. Hence arises that conduct which is so justly reprobated in the text, &c.

No. 99.—The same author, on Rom. ii. 17—23.

It is *generally acknowledged* that the heart of man is deceitful; but the extent of its deceitfulness is but little known. It is not in things of minor importance only that its delusive operations are felt, but in things of everlasting concern, where it might be supposed we should be most on our guard against them. It deceives us by the strangest misrepresentation of things, by keeping out of view what ought to be seen—and most effectually deceives itself. It leads us to substitute a profession of religion for its reality, and to rest in its forms without the substance, which is the most preposterous thing imaginable. This species of self-deceit obtained to an awful degree among the Jews, with whom St. Paul in the text expostulates.

This last example is formed of the *leading ideas of a sermon* on Jer. xvii. 9: wanting nothing more than to amplify them, and to show the extreme state of wickedness that accompanies the deception itself; and as an improvement, the necessity of conversion. As an exordium it is well adapted to Rom. ii. 17—23.

Many exordiums commence in an INTERROGATIVE form. Some examples of this kind have already been given under the Topics, and I add

No. 100.—Walker, on 1 John v. 11: "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son."

Why do not all to whom these good tidings are published receive them with humble gratitude and joy? Are they expressed in terms so dark and ambiguous that their meaning and import cannot be fully ascertained? or is the



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offer of *life* loaded with such hard conditions as exceed the powers of those to whom it is addressed? Were either of these the case, unbelief would be furnished with something more than a plausible excuse. But every body must be sensible that neither of these objections can, with any colour of justice, be charged upon the *record* as it lies before us in my text. To what then shall we attribute the cold reception it meets with from the bulk of mankind; the contemptuous rejection of it by many; and the violent opposition that is made to it by not a few?

No. 101.—Blair, with some trifling alteration, on Prov. xix. 3: "The foolishness of man perverteth his way," &c.

Is it a new or uncommon thing to hear men complain of the misery and distress that fill the world? Do not the high and the low, the young and the aged, join in such complaints? Since the beginning of time what Topic has been more fertile of declamation than the vanity and vexation which man is appointed to suffer? But are we certain that this vexation, and this vanity, is altogether to be ascribed to the appointment of heaven? Is there no ground to suspect that man himself is the chief and immediate author of his own sufferings? What the text plainly suggests is, that it is common for men to complain *groundlessly* of Providence; that they are prone to accuse God for the evils of life, when in reason they ought to accuse themselves; and that after their foolishness hath perverted their way, and made them undergo the consequences of their own misconduct, they impiously fret in heart against the Lord. This is the doctrine which I now propose to illustrate, in order to silence the sceptic, and to check a repining and irreligious spirit. I shall for this end make some observations, first, on the external, and next, upon the internal, condition of man; and then conclude with such serious and useful improvement as the subject will naturally suggest.

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Some very striking and excellent exordiums commence with EXCLAMATION.

No. 102.—Jay, on Rom. xi. 2—4.

How numerous, how various, how opposite to each other, are the mistakes of mankind! The lives, and the language of many, seem to imply a full persuasion that there is very little evil in sin; that the difficulties of religion are by no means great; that it is an easy thing to be a Christian; that, if there be a hell, few are wicked enough to be turned into it; and that the generality of our fellow-creatures are in a fair way for heaven. This persuasion is as false as it is fatal.

It is possible, however, to fall into another extreme, and to draw an unwarrantable conclusion respecting the state of religion, and the number of its adherents; and even wise men and good men are liable to this. "Wot ye not what the Scripture saith of Elias?" &c.

No. 103.—Simeon, on Eph. i. 4—7: "But God who is rich in mercy," &c.

What an accumulation of sublime ideas is here presented to our view! We scarcely know whether to admire more the grace of the benefactor, or the felicity of those who participate his blessings. But the text requires us to fix our attention on that most delightful of all subjects, the riches of divine grace, in its source, in its operation, and in end.

Let the student however take care that in his notes of admiration he does not expose himself to ridicule by overstepping the bounds of moderation. For instance, the following example ought not to be imitated:—

No. 104.—Simeon, on Jer. ii. 31: "O generation, see ye the word of the Lord: Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?" &c.

I am perfectly astonished! I can *scarcely believe my own eyes!* Who is it that thus addresses us and vindi-

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cates his own character against the accusations which, by our lives at least, we bring against him? It is none other than Jehovah himself, calling upon us to prove, if we can, that he merits at our hands the treatment he has received from us! Often does he call upon heaven and earth to judge betwixt him and his people. But in the chapter before us he supposes himself to be charged with having acted unkindly, not to say injuriously, towards them: "Hear ye the word of the Lord," &c.

The introductory ideas may also be clothed in the LANGUAGE OF SCRIPTURE. A great number of Jay's sermons commence in this way, but a single example will suffice.

No. 105. Jay's Sermons, vol. i. p. 183, on Heb. ii. 10: "It became him, for whom," &c. The author commences with this passage:—

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." The words of this quotation, my brethren, contain a reflection always seasonable, always useful, always necessary, when we would regard the work of the Lord, or the operation of his hand. It may be exemplified in numberless instances, but in none so easily and so fully as in the redemption of the world by means of a Mediator, "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," &c.

QUOTATIONS from theological writers may be employed in a similar manner.

No. 106.—Take Rom. iv. 25: "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

"Our doctrine of justification," observes Luther, "is the pillar upon which the reformed religion rests;" and, agreeably with this observation, he strenuously maintained that they must stand or fall together. Certain it is that

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the subject of justification makes a very distinguished figure in that religion which is from above, and is a very capital article of that faith which was once delivered to the saints. Far from being a merely speculative point, it spreads its influence through the whole body of divinity, runs through Christian experience, and operates on every part of practical godliness. Such is its grand importance that a mistake about it has a malignant efficacy. Nor can this appear strange when it is considered that the doctrine of justification is no other than the way of a sinner's acceptance with God. Being of such peculiar moment, it is inseparably connected with many other evangelical truths, the harmony and beauty of which we cannot behold while that is misunderstood. It is, if any thing may be so called, an essential article, and certainly requires our most serious attention.

An HISTORICAL FACT will occasionally answer the same end.

No. 107.—Rom. xiv. 12.

Plutarch relates that Alcibiades called one day to see Pericles, and was told by his domestics that their master was busy in preparing his accounts to lay before the republic: to which he immediately replied, "Instead of labouring to make up his accounts, it would be incomparably better to render himself not accountable to them at all." This, brethren, is the notion of almost all wicked men, who, being ignorant of God their governor, and feeling their consciences charged with a thousand crimes, think only of eluding the judgment of God, and of avoiding that account which they will one day be obliged to give to their Sovereign Lord. We may be assured that there can be no other way to take than to come before him now with the most ample heartfelt acknowledgment of our offences, in the language of the returning prodigal, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight."

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It has been recommended by Claude and others to be very sparing of such ancient references; but I think the discretion of the preacher will, in general, be a sufficient guard against improprieties of this nature.

At other times a SUITABLE ANECDOTE may be introduced.

No. 108.—Jay's Morning Exercises, vol. i., p. 9, on Deut. xxxiii. 25: "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Dr. Doddridge was one day walking much depressed, his very heart desolate within him. "But," says he, "passing a cottage door open, I happened at that moment to hear a child reading, 'As thy days, so shall thy strength be.' The effect on my mind was indescribable. It was like life from the dead." So much is often done by a word unexpectedly and undesignedly spoken.

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# LECTURE XXXIV.

## ON PERORATIONS.

I NOW arrive at that part of sermonizing for which all the preceding parts are intended to prepare, and, like the voyage of life, this important part ought to be well finished, whatever defects may have marked the progress. As I have hitherto followed the excellent general outline of Claude, so I shall preserve his *main idea* to the end, which here is to "make a powerful impression on the audience:" but I must beg leave to exchange the French style for the English, because I think the latter is for Englishmen the best. In general the French eloquence and the English have very distinct characteristics: one seems to be chiefly formed upon the philosophy of the passions, the other is plain and homely, yet powerfully appeals to the conscience and the understanding; and we do not hesitate, as Englishmen, on which to fix our regards, or which example to follow. I fear not comparison or the trial as to which will be most efficient in perorations. A transient effect on the passions might be produced by the eloquence of Bourdolüe, Bossuet, Massillon, or even Fenelon, on the court of Louis XIV.; but the history of that era records no genuine conversions; the monarch and the



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It has been recom[illegible] they were alarmed or very sparing of [illegible] t turned to their follies discretion of t[illegible] her was heard as the guard again[illegible] e, or could play well At oth[illegible] nent impression was duced, [illegible] s produced by very N[illegible] e tragic muse, nay, D[illegible] llable of sense. A [illegible]imated, or may be [illegible]d: but when our [illegible], when the appeal is made [illegible] understanding and the heart, we may reasonably expect that more permanent though perhaps less powerful impressions will be produced.



Such is my apology for preferring English perorations; and such as I shall adduce will I think fully maintain our high character; and that I may not extend my observations to increase the bulk of my Lectures, already far exceeding my expectations, I shall only add a few practical remarks of a general nature, and leave this important branch of study, with the examples, to the wisdom and discretion of the student.

In the first place, let it be constantly borne in mind that, in order to succeed well in the peroration, your whole discourse must be regularly preparatory to it, to secure which the eye of the preacher must be always upon this end, whatever text or plan of discussion he may adopt. The best way in general, before sitting down to compose, is to fix on the main impression intended to be made, to keep the mind and pen in a state of subordination to the final point, and to compel every thing to contribute its just share towards it.

Further, it is a great fault to utter that in the previous parts of the discourse which is by its very nature more peculiarly suited to the conclusion, unless in the instance

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mentioned in a former Lecture,* which forms a particular exception; but, notwithstanding the necessary caution which is the object of this note, there is nothing more usual, even with good preachers, so to err that they spoil such sermons entirely. At any rate some main point may be reserved, even where the impression is anticipated; but the error referred to, if committed into writing, may be remedied by transposing such part to the end of the discourse, and supplying its place by some other Topic.

In studying a peroration there are two ideas that seem to me important. First, fix or place strongly before your mind the pattern of what your hearer ought to be; and, secondly, conceive as correctly as possible what you think the hearer actually *is* in reference to the text and subject; and from these two ideas form your address. For want of this management the preacher may say a great many excellent things, but may pass over the most important ones, and such as most directly apply to the state and character of his hearers.

To preserve attention you will not be very anxious to say all you can; it is better to be too short than too long, provided the matter be strong and strongly expressed. To travel round and round the final period like a horse in a mill is injudicious: it is better to close with dignity and spirit, in some bold and terse sentence; perhaps while the hearer is prepared for your proceeding further: and I add, it is proper to direct such last sentence rather towards the gospel of peace than the terrors of Sinai. If, however, you foresee that your peroration will be somewhat long, the discourse must be shortened to admit of it: the people should not be detained beyond the usual time; for, after the moment when they expect dismissal, very little profitable attention will be paid.

Allow me to add that, as of course you will make a

* The Lecture alluded to contains my alteration of Dr. Gill's Sermon on Col. i. 19, for which see Index of Texts.

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short pause when your discussion is ended, you should here endeavour to collect yourself, that you may be ready to resume with confidence. In these golden moments you ought to make a strong but private aspiration to heaven that the Holy Spirit may deign to accompany this effort with power to all hearts: 1 Thess. i. 4, 5, &c.

As there are several different methods of constructing a peroration, each of which has its own peculiar advantages, I shall now endeavour to bring the principal of these before you, and illustrate them by such examples as I have been able to collect from good authors. In order to bring your subject to some immediately useful bearing, which is the great point to be aimed at in the peroration, you may

### Deduce inferences.

In discoursing on doctrines or facts, this kind of conclusion is generally and very properly adopted. When the preacher has illustrated any scriptural fact, or explained, proved, or confirmed any doctrine, he has then merely prepared the way for applying the subject to his hearers, and the most natural way of doing this is to draw such inferences as the subject may suggest. The Scriptures afford numerous examples of this method of applying a subject: "God has loved us; therefore we ought to love one another:" 1 John iv. 11. "With regard to these," Dr. Blair very justly observes, "care should be taken, not only that they rise naturally, but, what is less commonly attended to, that they should so much agree with the strain of sentiment throughout a discourse as not to break the unity of the sermon. For inferences, how justly soever they may be deduced from the doctrines of a text, yet have a bad effect if at the conclusion of the discourse they introduce some subject altogether new, and turn off our attention from the main object to which the mind had been directed. They appear in this case like excrescences jutting out of the

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body, which form an unnatural addition to it, and tend to enfeeble the composition and first design."

No. 1.—Simeon, on Isai. xlii. 16.—"The mysteriousness of divine providence"—draws the following inferences:—

1. That we should be careful not to pass a hasty judgment on the Lord's dealings. We are too apt to exclaim with Jacob, Gen. xlii. 36, "All these things are against me!" yet the trials we complain of may be, as in his case, the necessary means of our preservation; and it is the wisest course for a believer to wait with patience for the issue. 2. That we may safely commit ourselves to God's disposal; for God alone knows what is best for us. He knows too how to accomplish his designs in the best manner. Let us therefore commit all our concerns to him. Let us lie as clay in the potter's hand. In whatsoever distress we be, let us follow the prophet's direction: "Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Isa. xxvi. 4.

No. 2.—The same author, on Josh. vii. 19, 20—"Achan's punishment"—infers,

1. The deceitful nature of sin. 2. The certainty of exposure. 3. The awfulness of its award.

No. 3.—The same author, on Ps. cxiii. 5—8—"The divine condescension"—concludes with an address introduced by way of inference:—

Does God so condescend to you? then let me call on you, 1. To adore him. 2. To trust in him. 3. To glorify him.

Every author and preacher abounds with conclusions of this kind; but these examples are quite sufficient.

Instead of establishing a doctrine, and then drawing practical inferences from it, as exemplified in the foregoing examples, the preacher may treat an important subject *practically*, and then, if he thinks proper, conclude by a short defence of his doctrine; and perhaps there is no

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better way of doing this than by showing its utility or necessity.

No. 4.—Davies, on 1 Cor. iii. 7, having treated of the divine influences accompanying the gospel, concludes by showing their necessity—that the very life, and the whole success, of the gospel depends on them.

Since it has been the mode to compliment mankind as able to do something very considerable in religion, religion has died away. Since it has been the fashion to press a reformation of men's lives, without inculcating the absolute necessity of divine grace to renew their nature, there is hardly such a thing as a thorough reformation to be seen, but mankind are evidently growing worse. Since men think they can do something, and scorn to be wholly dependant on divine grace, the Lord, as it were, looks on, and suffers them to make the experiment; and alas! it is likely to be a costly experiment to many. Well may the Lord say, "Woe unto them when I depart from them!"

In this manner Mr. Davies proceeds, for two or three pages, to vindicate his point, by showing the unreasonableness of the contrary.

### Make Reflections on the Subject.

Such reflections will often be a kind of inferences; but, as they will appear in a somewhat different form, and possess a more general character, they are worthy of distinct consideration.

No. 5.—Simeon, on Prov. v. 22. "The captivating power of sin."

I. The declaration itself.

1. A judgment inflicted. 2. A warning given.

II. The reflections which it naturally suggests.

1. How thankful should we be for the gospel of Christ! 2. How watchful should we be against the first incursions

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of sin! 3. How constant should we be in waiting upon the Lord Jesus Christ, both in his public ordinances and in secret prayer!

There is an excellence in this plan very usual with our author, when treating of many Old Testament passages, to turn the hearers to something respecting Christ. If it be possible, the Saviour must appear: the author is determined to find room for him.

No. 6.—The same author, on Hab. ii. 3. "Duty in reference to the promises."

1. How attentive should we be to the promises which God has made to us! 2. How ashamed should we be of ever yielding to unbelief! 3. How awful is the state of those who, instead of being interested in the promises, are obnoxious to the threatenings!

No. 7.—The same author, on Ps. xxx. 5. "The mercy of God."

In this view of the subject I would call your attention to the following obvious and salutary reflections:—

1. How deeply to be pitied are the blind and impenitent world! 2. How richly to be congratulated is the weeping penitent! 3. What promises and thanksgivings are due from the pardoned sinner!

No. 8.—The same author, on John xiv. 8—11. "Christ one with the Father."

Hence we may see—

1. How slow even the best of men are to apprehend and believe the truths of the gospel. 2. How much infirmity there is mixed even with our best services. 3. What reason we have to bless our God, who has provided us with such a Saviour.

No. 9.—The same author, on Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. "The new heart," &c.

Reflect on the promise in the text—

1. As to its freeness. 2. Its suitableness. 3. Its preciousness: 2 Pet. i. 4.

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This is a very excellent conclusion, and a very necessary one, giving an opportunity to introduce things which, according to the primary scheme, could not well be included. According to Blair, these reflections may be conducted in the form of paraphrase.

### Raise propositions.

I have already noticed Burkitt's two-fold division of a text, vol. i., p. 88, 89. If the preacher be disposed to treat his subject in a purely expository manner, he may employ Burkitt's propositions (intimated by the word "learn") as inferences, or, more properly, points of enlarged discussion, as there stated. This is a very edifying variety, of which Mr. Simeon has several instances.

No. 9.—Simeon, on Ps. lxxiii. 23, 24. "The Christian's experience and hopes." His heads are:—

I. The believer's present experience.

1. The saint with his God. 2. His God with him.

II. His future prospects.

1. Guidance all the way to glory. 2. Glory itself at the end.

To conclude (he says) see then the Christian's life exhibited:—1. As an arduous life. 2. An anxious life. 3. A happy life. 4. A glorious life.

Now these in fact are so many propositions to be treated in a familiar manner, but requiring some degree of argument and proof.

No. 10.—Ps. xxv. 11. "The proper method of praying to God."

The conclusion turns upon the following statements:—

1. The vilest sinner has no reason to despair. 2. The most eminent saints have no ground to boast.

No. 11.—1 Kings xviii. 21. "Decision of character."

Decision of character warrants us to assert, that, in

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comparing life to a journey, it undoubtedly furnishes—1. The easiest way. 2. The safest way. 3. The happiest way.

These three points might obviously have formed the principal division of the subject.

### ADDRESS DIFFERENT CHARACTERS.

This is evidently a matter of considerable importance, and well deserves your attentive study; for it requires much experimental skill and a deep acquaintance with the human heart to adapt your address to all the varieties of character which come before you.

No. 12.—President Davies, vol. iv., p. 81, on Jer. v. 3. "Mortality improved."

I hope this subject will confirm the wavering hopes of some of you, and enable you to draw the happy conclusion, Well, if this be conversion, I think I may venture to pronounce myself a *converted* character. Then happy are ye indeed. I have not time to say many comfortable things to you at present, but go to your Bibles; there you will find precious promises enough: live and feast upon them, and ere long they will be all fulfilled to you, and you shall live and feast with your Saviour in paradise.

My main business to-day is with the *unconverted;* and have not some of you discovered yourselves to be such this day? Well, what is to be done now? can you go on careless and secure under this tremendous conviction? I hardly think any of you are arrived to such a pitch of presumption and fool-hardiness as this. Must you despair, and give up all hopes of salvation? No, unless you choose it. I mean unless you choose to neglect the means appointed for your conversion, and harden yourselves in sin. If you are determined on this course, then you may despair indeed; there is not the least ground of hope for you: but should you now rouse out of your security, and seek

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the Lord in earnest, you have the same encouragement to hope which any one of the many millions of converts in heaven or earth had while in your state: therefore let me persuade you to take this course immediately.

But when I begin to persuade I am in Jeremiah's perplexity: "To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear?" ch. vi. 10. Shall I speak to you, *men of business* and hurry? Alas! you have no leisure to mind such a trifle as your soul. Shall I speak to you, *men of wealth?* Alas! this is a business beneath your notice. What! a gentleman cry for converting grace! that would be a strange sight indeed. Shall I speak to you, *old men,* my venerable fathers in age? Alas! you are so hardened by a long course of sinning, that you are not likely to hear. Shall I speak to you, ye *relicts* of those families where death has made such a havoc?* Surely you must be disposed to hear me; surely you cannot put me off so soon. I hope sickness and death have been sent among you as my assistants, that is, to enforce what I say, and be the means of your conversion. Shall I speak to you, *young people?* Alas! you are too merry and gay to listen to such serious things, and you perhaps think it is time enough as yet. Thus I am afraid you will put me off; I shall hardly know where to turn, for of all the unconverted among us I have most hopes of you. Old sinners are so confirmed in their estrangements from God that there is little hope of such veterans; but the habits of sin are not so strong in you, and God is wont to work upon persons of your age. If you then put me off, where shall I turn? Behold, I turn to the Gentiles. Poor Negroes!† shall I find one among you that is willing to turn to God? Many of you are willing to be baptized, but that is not the thing; are you willing to turn to God with all your hearts, as I have ex-

* A time of great and general sickness and mortality.

† In America, where this sermon was preached, many Negroes attended the preaching of the gospel.

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plained to you? This is the grand point. What do your hearts answer to it? If you also refuse; if you all refuse, then what remains for your poor minister to do but to return home, and make this complaint to him that sent him: "Lord, there were unconverted sinners among my hearers, and in my poor way I made an honest trial to turn them to thee, but, Lord, it was in vain; they refused to return, and therefore I must leave them to thee, to do what thou pleasest with them." Oh, will you constrain me to make this complaint upon any of you to my Divine Master? Oh! free me from the disagreeable necessity. Come, come all, rich and poor, young and old, bond and free, "come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up; and we shall live in his sight."

No. 13.—Simeon, on John vi. 28, 29. "The necessity of faith." Having explained the subject, and shown its necessity (or rather its pre-eminence), he concludes by the following address, which I give at length as a good example of the point in hand, and one which is well worthy of your imitation.

1. Is there, then, an *Inquirer* here? I suppose there are some who are ready to ask, 'What shall we do that we may work the works of God?' Let me, before I reply to this, ask in return, Are you *sincere* in making this inquiry? And will you, if I set before you the very truth of God, endeavour earnestly to comply with it? If this be really the disposition of your minds, then do I confidently return to you the answer which St. Paul gave to the jailer's inquiry, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This is the work which must be done by all: and, this really and truly done, you shall as surely find acceptance with God as if you were already in heaven. I do not say that, when you have done this, there remains nothing more to be done; but I say that, if this be really done, all the rest will follow. Only find the sweetness of

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that truth, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," and you will soon attain the character inseparable from it: "you will not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

2. But methinks I hear the voice of an *Objector*. Some one, perhaps, is saying, 'A fine easy way to heaven indeed! Only believe; and you may live as you will, and be sure of heaven at the last!' But this objection will never be urged by one who knows what faith really is. Were it a mere assent to any set of truths, we might well be alarmed at the virtue assigned to it. But it is a grace which contains in it the seed of all other graces. We speak of a living, not a dead faith; and a living faith will as surely be productive of holiness both of heart and life as the light of the sun will dispel the shadows of the night. But the objector will say that our whole statement is contrary to the Holy Scriptures, since our blessed Lord, in answer to one who had asked him, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" replied, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." The same answer will I give, if, like that inquirer, you are determined to save yourself by your doings. But then, remember, you must keep them all, and perfectly too, and from the first to the latest moment of your existence. But if, in one instance, even though it be in thought only, you fail, the law will curse you to all eternity; as it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." And if you will not rest your hopes on such an obedience as this, then is there no other refuge for you but the Lord Jesus Christ, nor any other hope of acceptance for you than through faith in him. But, if you still wish to adhere to the commandments, know that "this is God's commandment, that ye believe in his Son Jesus Christ;" and that there is no commandment in the decalogue more peremptorily given than this; since it is expressly declared that,

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"if you obey it, you shall be saved; if you obey it not, you shall be damned."

3. Let me not close this subject without a few words to one, as an *Approver*. It is truly delightful to think that, however hostile the heart of man is to this doctrine, there are some who cordially approve of it. Beloved brother, whoever thou art, who embracest it from thy heart, I congratulate thee from my inmost soul. For, in relation to all other works, a self-righteous man can never tell whether he has a sufficiency of them to justify him before God. To his latest hour he must be in fearful suspense about the state of his soul; but thou hast in thy own bosom a ground of the fullest assurance. The work of faith is such as will at once commend itself to thy conscience as really done. Thou wilt feel a consciousness that thou renouncest every other hope, and reliest on Christ alone. And in Christ there is such a sufficiency of all that thou needest, that thou canst not possibly entertain a doubt whether he be able to save thee to the uttermost. Go on, then, "strong in faith, and giving glory to God." And as the world will look for the fruits of thy faith, yea, and as God himself also will judge by them, see that thou show thy faith by thy works, and that thou "abound in all the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God."

No. 14.—The same author, on Prov. viii. 29, &c.—"Wisdom's address to men"—concludes by enlarging on the following thoughts:—

Hear the voice of wisdom,—1. Ye children in age. 2. Ye children in understanding. 3. Ye children in grace.

A multitude of examples might be selected from the same author, and I must in justice add, that he has manifested much skill in constructing them so as to preserve great variety.

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APPLY THE SUBJECT IN DIFFERENT VIEWS.

This, though not very different to the preceding, and amounting in the end to the same thing, will yet furnish a suitable variety in the mode of address.

No. 15.—Simeon, on Isa. xlv. 9—"Striving with our Maker"—concludes,

1. In a way of indignant reproof. Who amongst us has been guilty of the crime here reprobated? Yea, whose life has not been one continued act of rebellion against God? Now, if it were "our *Maker*" only that had been so treated by us, no words would have been sufficient to declare the enormity of our crime. But our Maker has been our *Redeemer* also; yea, and he has given his own life a ransom for us: yet have we "trodden under foot his blood" by our contemptuous indifference, and even "crucified him afresh" by our continuance in sin. Judge ye, then, what we deserve at God's hands. And now let me ask, whether ye intend to persist in this conduct? If ye do, I can say nothing but what Paul said to persons of this character, "Your damnation is just."

2. In a way of compassionate exhortation. The prophet Jeremiah, having stated the very argument before us, and shown that God might justly, as a potter, mar the work which had presumed to rise up against him, goes on to observe that, notwithstanding all our past guilt, God is yet ready to forgive us, if only with penitent and contrite hearts we turn unto him. And happy am I to confirm this blessed sentiment; yea, and to declare that not one, whatever may have been his guilt in past times, shall ever be cast out, provided he come in the name of Jesus Christ, founding his hope on his all-atoning sacrifice, and his all-prevailing intercession. As God's servant, then, I now announce to you these blessed tidings; and declare, in God's name, that "though your sins may have been red as scarlet, they shall be as snow; though they have been

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as crimson, they shall be as wool." Only cease from strife on your part, and God will be reconciled to you, and be your God, for ever and ever.

No. 16.—Simeon, on Mal. iii. 8. "Sin a robbery of God."

Let me now in conclusion address you,

1. In a way of indignant inquiry. Will you continue to "rob God?" &c.

2. In a way of affectionate exhortation. Undertake not to pay Jehovah from any funds of your own. To all eternity you would be unable to present to him an equivalent for the smallest sin. But you need not attempt it. In Christ you have "a propitiation, not for your sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Go to him, therefore, as your surety; and plead with God all that he has done and suffered for you, &c.

No. 17.—The same author, on Hab. ii. 20. "God greatly to be feared."

From this subject we may gain ample matter,

1. For reproof. It is truly surprising that, with all our knowledge of God, we should be so regardless of him as not to have him "in all (or any of) our thoughts," &c.

2. For encouragement. God is indeed in his holy temple, ready to hear the weeping suppliant, and mighty to save his repenting people, &c.

No. 18.—The same author, on Micah vi. 2, 3. "God's controversy with his people."

Conceiving then the cause terminated, I will offer a few words—1. In a way of candid appeal. 2. In a way of salutary advice. Offer not excuses *now* which will not avail you in the day of judgment, &c.

### Recapitulate.

It has been common to rail against the practice of repeating the heads of a discourse towards the close, and referring in some sort to the principal points of the subject

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in the subsequent prayer. The latter I think requires great delicacy; but the former cannot be given up, as it is one method out of many of oratorical skill for the purpose of giving effect to a discourse; and, if the recapitulation be coupled with strong comments on the general subject, it will form one of the most powerful methods of concluding. There is nothing artificial in this method of peroration; for when many things have been said, and many words employed to illustrate and confirm them, what can be more natural than to bring the main points together in close order, to prevent their escape? We have an example of this in the book of Deuteronomy, in which is to be found almost every figure calculated to persuade. Deut. xi. 26, 27: "Behold, I set (or have set) before you this day a blessing and a curse," &c. And indeed the whole book has its name from being a recapitulation of former injunctions, experiences, &c. This is what Keckerman calls bringing the several lines together, as rays are collected in the focus of a burning glass, to inflame the hearts of the auditors.

No. 19.—Blair, on 2 Pet. iii. 3. "On scoffing at religion."

The conclusion from all these reasonings which we have pursued is, that religion and virtue, in all their forms, either of *doctrine or of precept*—of *piety towards God, integrity towards men,* or *regularity in private life,*—are so far from affording any ground of ridicule to the petulent, that they are entitled to our highest veneration. They are names which should never be mentioned but with the utmost honour. It is said in Scripture, "fools make a mock at sin:" they had better make a mock at pestilence, at war, or famine. With one who would choose these public calamities for the subject of his sport, you would not be inclined to associate; you would fly from him as worse than a fool, as a man of distempered mind. Yet certain it is that, to the great society of mankind, sin is a greater

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calamity than either pestilence, or famine, or war; therefore in the seat of the scorner never sit," &c.

If there is any fault here, I should think it is that the recapitulation is too *short;* this peroration should be read as a good specimen of *Comment.*

No. 20.—Simeon, on Numb. xiv. 20, 21. "God's answer to the intercession of Moses." The conclusion is a summary or concentration of the chief parts of the discourse.

Behold now this glory of the Lord! see how it shines throughout this mysterious dispensation! see his condescension in hearing prayer—his mercy in forbearing vengeance—his justice in punishing sin—his goodness in rewarding virtue—his faithfulness in fulfilling his word—and his power to execute his sovereign will and pleasure! Let the whole earth contemplate it; let all transmit the knowledge of it to those around them, and assist in spreading it to the remotest heathen; let all expect the time when this view of God shall be universal through the whole world, and all shall give him the glory of his immutable perfections.

And whilst we view the glory of God in his past works, let us remember what will be the final issue of all his dispensations. His glory will hereafter shine in still brighter splendour.—When his answers to the prayers of all his people shall be known, how marvellous will his condescension and grace appear!—When the sins of the whole world shall be made manifest, how shall we be filled with wonder at his long-sufferance and forbearance!—How tremendous will his justice and severity be found, when millions of impenitent sinners are cast headlong into the bottomless abyss!—And when his obedient people shall be exalted to thrones of glory, how will his goodness and mercy be admired and adored!—Then also will his truth and faithfulness be seen in the exact completion of every promise he has ever given; and his power and might be



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gratefully acknowledged by all whom he has redeemed, sanctified, and saved.

This then is certain, that in every human being he will be glorified. But the question is, How will he be glorified in *me?* will it be in my salvation or condemnation? In answering this question aright we are all deeply interested: nor will it be difficult to answer it, provided we inquire what our real character is. Do we resemble the unbelieving and rebellious Israelites, or those believing spies who "followed the Lord fully?" Vast was the difference between them, and consequently the discrimination will be easy. The Lord grant that we may "so judge ourselves now, that we may not be judged of the Lord" in that awful day.

No. 21.—The same author, on Psa. cxix. 4—6. "Practical religion enforced."

Be ye then, brethren, Christians indeed.—Get just views of your duty both to God and man,—be like-minded with God in relation to it, desiring nothing but to be and to do all that God himself requires;—and know where all your help and hope is,—not in yourselves, but in the Lord your God, who alone can guide you by his counsel, and bring you to glory (and then cite Heb. xiii. 20, 21).

The above are the heads of the discourse.

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# LECTURE XXXV.

## ON PERORATIONS.—PART II.

HAVING in the preceding Lecture pointed out the different methods upon which conclusions are usually constructed, I shall now offer you some specimens of different kinds of address suited to this part of a discourse. These I shall, for obvious reasons, distinguish according to their leading characteristics, though you must not expect to find the examples of a perfectly simple and unmixed character. I begin with

### THE APPELLATORY.

Under this head may be included all those perorations which consist chiefly of direct appeal to the understanding and the conscience of the hearer, as to the soundness, the truth, the reasonableness, &c., of the thing advanced, notwithstanding the force of prejudice, or habit, or inclination to the contrary hitherto prevailing. Thus our Saviour says, Luke xii. 57: "Yea, and why judge ye not what is right?" and Paul (1 Cor. x. 15): "Judge ye what I say." Such appeals are always to be accompanied or followed by strong comment, and perhaps counsels also. But this kind of ending should not be ventured upon unless you conceive that you have successfully lodged some conviction in the heart. In this case an appeal will always be happy in its effects.

No. 22.—Beddome closes his sermon against religious persecution (Acts ix. 4) with a fine appeal to persecutors,



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which is given as the language which the Saviour himself might be supposed to utter.

"I appeal to your reason and conscience: What injury have I done thee? What provocation have I given thee? Which of my offices offends thee? What part of my character or conduct makes me obnoxious to thy resentment? Art thou cruel because I am merciful? For which of my good works dost thou persecute me? As to my people, they are meek and unoffending, and not likely to disturb thy peace. I appeal to your unbiassed judgment, Can force and violence produce conviction? Can the prison and the cross be proper means of instruction? Does not all this violence show the malignity of thy heart against my gospel, the extermination of which is thy real design?" If, my brethren, such were the language of Jesus, are you who openly or secretly oppose the gospel or its followers, prepared to reply to Christ's questions? If not, how will you answer at the high tribunal in the great day?

No. 23.—Simeon closes a sermon on repentance with an appeal upon the several points on which he had insisted. The discourse is founded on Joel ii. 12—14; and as this example is the type of a very numerous class of perorations, I shall give it at some length. Our author says:

And now let me ask, 1. Is not this repentance necessary? I readily grant that many of you are free from any thing that comes under the name of gross sin; but who amongst you has not grievously departed from God? Who has not shamefully slighted our blessed Saviour? Who has not resisted the motions of the Holy Spirit? Who has not lived for time rather than for eternity, and to himself rather than unto his God? Here then is reason enough for every one of you to weep and mourn, and to rend your very souls to pieces before God, &c.

2. Are not the considerations with which the duty is enforced sufficient encouragements to the performance of it? I might have enforced the duty with far different argu-

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ments, and "persuaded you rather by the terrors of the Lord" to turn unto him; but I greatly prefer the views of God as he is exhibited in the text, &c.

3. Will not the mercies offered you amply compensate for all the efforts which you may make to obtain them? Truly, if there were but a "peradventure" that you should find mercy, it were worth all the labour of ten thousand years to obtain it. Think only what it must be to be monuments of God's righteous indignation to all eternity; and what it must be, on the other hand, to be everlasting monuments of his grace and love. Can you contemplate this alternative, and duly estimate its importance? No: you must go down to hell and taste the misery of the damned, and be exalted to heaven to enjoy the blessedness of the saints in glory, before you can form any just idea of what is before you either to be suffered or enjoyed, according as your state shall be found before God.

### THE ENTREATING.

The Scriptures afford abundant examples in which God himself condescends to entreat his unworthy and unhappy creatures to accept his blessings; and as the ambassadors of Christ, we also are bound to beseech and to entreat sinners to be reconciled to God.

No. 24.—Take Acts xxiv. 25: "Go thy way for this time," &c.

In conclusion I again address thee, procrastinating sinner. Thou pleadest for to-morrow with an eloquence worthy of a better cause. To-morrow, to-morrow, is the burden of every evening song. O my hearer, would you think to-morrow a proper time to stop a leak in the ship discovered to-day? Is not the idea of security abandoned by this? I cannot leave you under this delusion. "Dismiss me not thus; for your own sake, and out of tender compassion to your perishing immortal soul, I would not willingly take up with such a dismission and excuse: no,

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not though you fix a time; though you should determine on the next year, or month, or week, or day. I would turn upon you with all the eagerness and tenderness of friendly importunity, and entreat you to bring the matter to an issue even now; for if you say, I will think on these things to-morrow, I shall have but little hope, and shall conclude that all I have hitherto urged, and all that you have heard, has been uttered in vain."—*Doddridge.*

### THE EXPOSTULATORY.*

This kind of address is well calculated to carry conviction to the mind in the most efficient manner. What, for instance, can be more forcible than the expostulations of Scripture, mingled as they are both with appeal and entreaty? See Isa. i. 5 and 11, lv. 2; Ezek. xviii. 31, 32, xxxiii. 11; Micah vi. 3—5.

In your expostulations care must be taken that there be nothing harsh in your language; all your expressions must manifest an affectionate concern, a compassionate interest, in reference to the welfare of your hearers. I cannot give a more complete or a more excellent example of this kind than is furnished by Foster in his Introductory Essay to the Rise and Progress of Religion. Having drawn a vivid but just representation of the state of unconverted persons, absorbed in what are falsely called the pleasures of life, and of those forebodings of futurity which cannot be excluded from reflection, our author proceeds as follows:—

Here we conclude this long course of remonstrance. Perhaps you are ready to say, it is a rueful and offensive representation, just such as a splenetic spirit, which has quarrelled with the world, would be gratified to make in the wish to poison the satisfactions of those who have yet some cause to regard it as a friend; and who, at all events, think it yet too soon to fall into hostility with themselves.

* See my expostulatory address to a brother on propositional preaching.

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But consider at whose cost it will be, that you repel a statement which you cannot refuse. The truth of the matter goes, in reality, no further off from you for being rejected, any more than the hour of death can be deferred by refusing to think of it, or by heedlessness of the solemnity of the prospect. That the preceding description of your state is in substance the truth, we may challenge you to deny; to deny, that is to say, upon such serious and honest considerations as you cannot refuse without being guilty of the most horrible trifling. And we may appeal to your own reason, thus exercised, what would you think of a doctrine or a teacher that would consent to leave you satisfied with a plan of life which, for the sake of this world, renounces the good and braves the evil of the world to come? But though the representation, thus far, be of a menacing character, all is not dark. As we have seen in a pictured view of Babylon, supposed on the eve of its fall, there remains one portion of the hemisphere, and one celestial luminary, not yet obscured by the portentous shade.* While no colours can throw too gloomy an aspect on the condition in which you have been described, there shines on your view that great resource to which all this series of what may have seemed austere reprehensions has been aimed to constrain your attention. And if you could be made to apprehend the importance which there really is in the considerations so inadequately conceived and expressed, you would be awakened to wonder and gratitude that, after so constant and systematic a rejection of the sovereign good, you should not now find "a great gulf fixed between it and you." On your side of that tremendous chasm there is still religion accessible to you in all its blessings of deliverance, peace, and security, for hereafter. You are still on that favoured ground where you are invited by a God of mercy, a Redeemer with his atoning sacrifice, a Divine Spirit of all power and opera-

* Martin's picture of the fall of Belshazzar and of Babylon.

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tions of assistance, to enter yet at last into the possession of that which will be a glorious portion when all you have been striving with the world to gain will vanish in dust and smoke.

Shall we anticipate another objection in the form of a query? "What *can* we do? we cannot *make* ourselves religious." Though we should admit that this is all true, and of the last importance, we cannot for that command and compel our dispositions to change into the new order required. "What *can* we do?" The answer to this should be appropriate to the temper in which it is spoken. We have heard of instances of expressions like these being uttered evidently in a spirit of impious and desperate carelessness. There was no real concern about the subject, but a determined addiction to the world, and to so much of sin as that should involve a wilful avoidance of reflection, a stupid and defying indifference to consequences; and all this taking to itself an excuse, or almost a justification, from the moral impotence of our nature. The man was in effect saying, "As I am resolved to pursue my course, it were a satisfaction to believe, and I *will* believe, that I can do no otherwise; and, as I am to fulfil my destiny, the less I trouble myself with thinking about it the better. Now, to a person who should reply to religious admonitions in this disposition of mind, we should deem it utterly trifling and useless to offer any pleading of speculatively theological or of metaphysical argument. The reasoning faculty of such a man is a wretched slave, that will not, and dare not, listen to one word in presence and in contravention of his passions and will. The only thing there would be any sense in attempting, would be to press on him some strong images of the horror of such a deliberate self-consignment to destruction, and of the monstrous enormity of taking a kind of comfort in his approach to the pit, from the circumstance that a principle of his nature leads him to do it; just as if, because there is that in him which impels

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him to perdition, it would therefore not be *he* that would perish. Till some awful blast smite on his fears, his reason and conscience will be unavailing.

If he be guarded on the side of his fears, by entertaining a light opinion of that consequence on which he is so precipitating himself; should he say, that it certainly *would* be a dreadful thing thus resolutely to go forward to it, and a flagrantly absurd one thus to satisfy himself in doing so, *if* he had any such appalling estimate of that future ruin as religious doctrine affects to enforce; but that he believes this threatening to be a prodigious exaggeration,—we have only to reply that, as he has not yet seen the world of retribution, he is to take his estimate of its awards from the declarations of Him who knows what they are, and that it is at his peril he presumes to entertain any other. If any one answers to this, that he does not believe in the existence of such declarations, he is not one of the persons we are meaning to address.

What follows is more directly in a way of expostulation.

But some of you will make the supposed reply, "What *can* we do?" in a less depraved temper of feeling. We will suppose that you are not quite indifferent on the subject, that you seriously admit the necessity of religion, and that you feel some uneasiness at your estrangement from it; that, in short, you wish you *could* be religious, and in this spirit somewhat despondingly put the question. For you we have a plain short answer; indeed we have anticipated this in some preceding part of the discourse. You *can* deliberately apply yourselves to a serious, honest, prolonged, repeated consideration of the subject. Do not incur the shame, for one moment, of pretending to doubt whether you can do this. On any one of your worldly matters of importance you know that you can fix your thoughts attentively, long, and again; you can severely examine in what manner it is connected with your interests, can weigh the reasons for and against, and look



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forward to near and more distant consequences. And you *can* do this with respect to religion. Do you allege that the subject being a strange and hitherto foreign one to your thoughts, and also presenting itself to you with a disquieting and reproachful aspect, your minds are strongly inclined to escape from beholding it? What then? You *can* think again of the absolute necessity of considering it, and can compel them back to confront it once more, and still again. You can recollect that nothing will be gained, and all will be lost, by ceasing to think of it. You can reflect that if you dismiss it now, because it does not please you, it will infallibly return upon you ere long to please you still less; and will return ultimately in such imperative force that it can no more be evaded or dismissed.

Perhaps there may be some of you who will complain that, notwithstanding sincere and considerable efforts to this purpose, you find that the subject does not, and seems as if it would not, take effective hold on your spirits; and that you cannot *feel* it to have that importance which you *know* it to have. And what then? again we reply. Are you going to make this a reason for suffering your minds to withdraw from the subject, and let it go?—the subject cannot go without abandoning you to the dominion of death! The question whether to yield to this obstinate defect of sensibility is the critical point of your contest with the deadly power of evil within you and without you: yield, and all will hasten to your ruin. But, surely, the terror of such a hazard and such an alternative, or the clear conviction at least *that you ought to feel terror at it*, must incite you to persevering and more earnest efforts. Look at it, dwell on it, and see whether a more protracted and intense consideration of it will cause or suffer your resolution to remit. That it should so remit is hardly conceivable of any rational being. But, if it even did so remit, that circumstance itself would bring a new and frightful phenomenon to rouse the spirit which had such a

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consciousness, and excite it to call for all compassionate powers and agencies to come to its rescue.

And here you are to be admonished that you cannot feel that you are faithfully making the required exertion, unless you have recourse to the most approved means for rendering it effectual. You believe that the Almighty admits his creatures, and indeed has, with endless iteration, invited and commanded them to express their necessities in petitions to him, and that he listens, with peculiar favour, to applications for spiritual good. You are not afraid to do this; and you are convinced on the strength of innumerable promises, and of the merits and intercession of Christ, that it would be successful. Though there did not appear to be any *immediate* success, you believe,—you absolutely *know*,—that persevering application to heaven *will* finally prevail. You can, with this absolute assurance, implore the removal of that odious insensibility, that indisposition, that aversion even, which you allege as a discouragement from persisting to apply yourselves to the all-important subject, and feel as a temptation to turn away from it. This *can* be done a thousand times over. It can be done as long as the evil and danger continue. And again and again we tell you that at each repetition you *know*, because God has declared it, that such application cannot ultimately fail. And oh, is it not worth while?

No. 25.—Walker, of Truro, furnishes an example which contains much solemn appeal mingled with affectionate expostulation. The sermon from which it is extracted was delivered in the parish church at Truro, April 27th, 1760. It is one of a course on the Church Catechism, and the last on the Apostles' Creed. The text prefixed to most of them is the same: Acts xvi. 30, 31. It was the last sermon that Mr. Walker preached; and many who heard it have borne testimony to the impression made by it as more than commonly powerful.

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Alas, alas! my dear friends, how shall many of us appear before the judgment-seat of Christ? For what have we to appear in? Where is our faith in Jesus Christ? What fellowship is there between him and our souls? Where are the works of faith—love to him, and to his people? Have we none of these to show? no owning of Christ, no following his words, no renouncing the ways of men for his sake, no love of his people, no giving so much as a cup of water to any because they are his? What, in no kind, in no degree, such works as he will own! and yet shall we receive according to our works? But what can we think of it then, if, instead of owning Christ, we have been opposing him; instead of loving his people, we have been hating them for being so; instead of having any good works to show for ourselves, Christ will find an endless number of evil works to show against us? What can we think of it, if nothing shall appear to have been done by us but evil continually; ceaseless, numberless works of darkness, in thought, word, or deed, as many as the days, hours, and minutes of our lives have been? What, my dear friends! will any of us be hardy enough to appear under these circumstances before Christ's judgment-seat, where nothing can be hid, and all will be laid open? Yet, remember, there we must all come, whether we will or no. God will have it so, and who can prevent it? To be plain, I am grieved at heart for many of you, to think how you will make your appearance before the judgment-seat. You have no works to speak there for your belonging to Christ; I can see none. I see works of various kinds that prove you do not belong to him. If a life of pleasure, idleness, company-keeping, indulgence, drunkenness, pride, covetousness, would recommend you to the favour of the Judge, few would be better received than numbers of you. In the name of God, my friends—when you know this moment in your own consciences that if, as you have been and are, you should be called to judgment, you would be as

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surely cast into hell as if you were already scorching in those dreadful flames—why will you live at such a rate? Well, we shall all be before the judgment-seat of Christ together. There the controversy, between me—persuading you by the terrors of the Lord, and you—determining to abide in your sins, will be decided. There it will appear whether your blood will be on your own heads for your obstinate impenitency, or upon mine for not giving you warning. Christ will certainly either acquit or condemn me on this account; and, if I should be acquitted herein, what will become of you? I tremble to think how so many words of mine will be brought up against you on that day. What will you say, what will you answer, how will you excuse yourselves? Oh, sirs, if you will not be prevailed on, you will with eternal self-reproach curse the day that you knew me, or heard one word from my mouth. Why, why, why will you die with so aggravated a destruction? O think of the judgment; think of it, and you will not be able to hold it out against your own souls. May the Lord incline you to do so; may he cause this word to sink deep into your hearts; may he show you all your danger: and, with an outstretched arm, bring you out of the hands of the devil, and translate you into the glorious kingdom of his dear Son!

### THE REMEDIAL.

Where the discourse has contained a good deal of censure, and alas! this "burden of the Lord" is too often necessary—too often we feel ourselves called on to "reprove, rebuke," &c.—but when this is done we should, in the kindest manner possible, propose what is right in the conclusion.

No. 26.—Blair, on 1 Cor. xiii. 4, having severely censured and exposed *envy*, proceeds in the peroration to propose a remedy thus:—

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Finally, in order to subdue envy, let us bring often into view those religious considerations which regard us particularly as Christians. Let us remember how unworthy we all are in the sight of God, and how much the blessings which each of us enjoys are beyond what we deserve. Let us nourish reverence and submission to that divine government that has appointed to every one such a condition in the world as is fitted for him to possess. Let us recollect how opposite the Christian spirit is to envy, and what sacred obligations it lays upon us to walk in love and charity towards one another. Indeed, when we reflect on the many miseries which abound in human life; on the scanty proportion of happiness which any is here allowed to enjoy; on the small difference which the diversity of fortune makes on that scanty proportion; it is surprising that envy should ever have been a prevalent passion among men; much more that it should have prevailed among Christians. Where so much is suffered in common, little room is left for envy. There is more occasion for pity and sympathy, and inclination to assist each other.

### THE DIRECTIVE.

When a peroration consists chiefly of directions, or counsels, it is upon the supposition that the previous discourse has prepared the mind to receive them, as an exordium prepares the mind to listen to the discourse. "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" Prov. xv. 23.

No. 27.—Simeon, on 2 Kings v. 13. "Naaman healed." From the striking resemblance between the conduct of Naaman and those who reject the gospel, he takes occasion to add a few words of advice in the following order:—

1. Bring not to the gospel any preconcerted notions of your own. 2. Let not passion dictate in matters of religion. 3. Be willing to take advice from your inferiors. 4. Make trial of the method proposed for your salvation.

These counsels are admirably deduced from the subject.

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Directions should generally be coupled with such descriptions and arguments as are calculated to stimulate and animate the mind to the performance, in which case the peroration may be denominated

THE ENCOURAGING.

No. 28.—Mr. R. Walker invites my attention as a pattern of this kind. His subject is an awakening one founded on Rom. iii. 19. In conclusion he says,—

Be persuaded, my dear friends, that it becomes you to "humble yourselves *presently* under the mighty hand of God, that you may be exalted in due time." See that you acknowledge your guilt and unworthiness, that you may not be finally condemned with the world; and beg of God that he may search and try you, and make you thoroughly acquainted with your real condition, that finding yourselves wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, you may repair without delay to that all-sufficient Saviour, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, and who is made of God unto you wisdom, &c.: I Cor. i. 30.

As for you upon whom the law has already had its effect, who are weary and heavy laden with the burden of sin, be not discouraged, the seeds of consolation are sown in your grief; and "upon you who thus fear his name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings," for this temper is the work of God. It is he who brings that light into the soul whereby its natural deformity is seen; it is he who subdues thy pride. It is the Divine Spirit who, ministering the law, removes all thy false grounds of hope, and makes thee cry, "What shall I do to be saved?" As John the Baptist, by preaching, roused sinners to a sense of sin, so the Holy Spirit prepares the heart for the reception of the glorious Redeemer: therefore your present painful feelings should be matter to you of joy. Lift up your heads then, O ye trembling souls; look forward but a very little way, and you may see

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to the end of that dark valley through which you are now passing.

No. 29.—Baine, p. 41. Rom. v. 21. The text is upon the last clause. The idea is that of a kingdom.

Let the subjects of this kingdom preserve their love and fidelity inviolable to its merciful and mighty monarch. Live as a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, in a sacred regard to his authority and willing obedience to his laws. Live in friendship and the exercise of kindest affections towards your fellow-members, knit together in love, and praying for their prosperity, that the just may flourish in his reign, and increase in number like the drops of dew that fall from the womb of the morning. Live by faith upon him: *he is Jehovah, the righteousness of his people,* and cast not away your hope that the reign of grace upon earth will be succeeded *with a kingdom of glory,* where all his faithful subjects shall reign with him for ever.

No. 30.—Blair, on fortitude, Psa. xxvii. 3. The whole of the peroration, which in fact is the third head of his discourse, extends over nine pages. The following is the concluding paragraph as a specimen of the style:—

Animated by these considerations, let us nourish that fortitude of mind which is so essential to a man and a Christian. Let no discouragement nor danger deter us from doing what is right. Through "honour and dishonour, through good report and evil report," let us preserve fidelity to our God and Saviour. Though a host should encamp against us, let us not fear to discharge our duty. *God assists us in the virtuous conflict,* and will crown the conqueror with eternal rewards: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "To him that overcometh," saith our blessed Lord, "I will grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne."

See also Jay's Sermons, vol. ii., pp. 28 and 125; Lavington, vol. i., pp. 109 and 458. I cannot afford room

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for more examples at length, but I recommend this class of conclusions wherever proper to the subject.

### THE CONSOLING.

It is a sin to neglect the objects for whom this title is intended. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people," is the divine command; but it is not any kind of senseless cant that will serve the purpose. As you would not think to entertain a person that had a fine ear for music with Scotch bagpipes, so a preacher must not expect to cheer or console a gracious soul with sounds that do not harmonize with its spiritual sensibilities. As far as possible we must be like Jesus, Isa. l. 4: "The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." By this passage it appears that the skill necessary is a divine gift: happy is he that possesses it.

No. 31.—Walker, on 2 Chron. v. 13, 14. The subject is of a cheerful strain, which having finished, he turns to a character supposed not to have entered into this joy.

But, alas! says one, what is all this to me? My harp must hang still upon the willows; how shall I, a wretched captive, presume to sing the songs of Zion? No evidences of grace are legible in my heart; grief and fear have so thoroughly possessed it that the love of God can find no room. How then, or to what purpose, shall I lift up my voice, while my whole soul is cast down within me? Now to such I would answer, in general, that let your case be as bad as you suppose it, yet still you have cause to bless the Lord. If you cannot thank him for his special grace, yet surely you ought to praise him for his unwearied patience, and those offers of mercy that are daily made to you: bless him that you are still upon earth, in the land of hope, and not confined to the regions of everlasting despair.

But I stop here; come forward into the light, thou dark, discouraged soul, and, in the presence of God, give a true

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and proper answer to these few questions. Thou complainest of the want of love to God, and thy complaints indeed show that thou hast no delighting and enjoying love; but answer me,—

1. Hast thou not a desiring, seeking love? A poor man who desires and seeks the world, shows his love to it as convincingly as the rich man who delights in it;—the tendency of the heart appears as truly in an anxious pursuit as in delightful enjoyment. But as the weakness of hope is frequently mistaken for the want of desire, I ask,

2. Do you not find a moaning, lamenting love? You show that you loved your friends by grieving for their deaths, as well as by delighting in them whilst they lived. If you heartily lament it as your greatest unhappiness and loss, when you think that God has cast you off, and that you are devoid of grace, and cannot serve him as you would; this is an undoubted evidence that your heart is not void of the love of God.

3. Would you not rather have a heart to love God than to have all the riches and pleasures in the world? Would it not comfort you more than any thing else if you could be sure that he loved you, and if you could perfectly love and obey him? If so, then know assuredly that it is not the want of love, but the want of assurance, that causeth thy dejection. And therefore I charge thee, in the name of God, to render unto him that tribute of praise which is due to him. To be much employed in this heavenly duty has an evident tendency to vanquish all hurtful doubts and fears;—by keeping the soul near to God, and within the warmth of his love and goodness;—by dissipating distrustful, vexing thoughts, and diverting the mind to sweeter things;—by keeping off the tempter, who usually is least able to follow us when we are highest in the praises of our God and Saviour;—and, especially, by bringing out the evidences of our sincerity while the chiefest graces are in exercise. Praise brings comfort to the soul as standing

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in the sunshine brings warmth to the body, or as the sight of a dear friend rejoices the heart, without any reasoning or arguing the case. Come then, my dear friends, and make the experiment. Obey the voice which proceedeth out of the throne, saying, "Praise ye our God, all ye his servants; and ye that fear him, both great and small."

I might here quote numerous examples of consolatory address adapted to *different occasions* and *circumstances*, but this my limits forbid; and I now pass to

### THE ELEVATING.

In this class of perorations the aim of the preacher is to raise in the minds of his hearers suitable images of the dignity or majesty of the subject of discourse. The following example is of this character:—

No. 32.—Blair, on 2 Pet. iii. 10. "The dissolution of the world."

Having now treated both of the creation and dissolution of the world, I cannot conclude without calling your thoughts to the magnificent view which these events afford of the kingdom and dominion of the Almighty. With reverence we contemplate his hand in the signal dispensations of Providence among men; deciding the fate of battles; raising or overthrowing empires; casting down the proud, and lifting up the low from the dust. But what are such occurrences to the power and wisdom which he displays in the higher revolutions of the universe; by his word forming or dissolving worlds; at his pleasure transplanting his creatures from one world to another, that he may carry on new plans of wisdom and goodness, and fill all space with the wonders of creation! Successive generations of men have arisen to possess the earth. By turns they have passed away, and gone into regions unknown. Us he has raised up to occupy their room. We too shall shortly disappear. But human existence never

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perishes. Life only changes its form, and is renewed. Creation is ever filling, but never full. When the whole intended course of the generations of men shall be finished, then as a shepherd leads his flock from one pasture to another, so the great Creator leads forth the souls which he has made into new and prepared abodes of life. They go from this earth to a new earth and new heavens; and still they remove only from one province of the divine dominion to another. Amidst all those changes of nature the great Ruler himself remains "without variableness or shadow of turning." To him these successive revolutions of being are but "as yesterday when it is past." From his eternal throne he beholds worlds rising and passing away; measures out to the creatures who inhabit them powers and faculties suited to their state; and distributes among them rewards and punishments proportioned to their actions. What an astonishing view do such meditations afford of the kingdom of God, infinite in its extent, everlasting in its duration; exhibiting, in every period, the reign of perfect righteousness and wisdom! "Who by searching can find out God? who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" "Great and marvellous are all thy works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints!"

### THE ALARMING.

What Claude calls the violent or vehement, from the rapid manner of expression, is well calculated to arouse the fears of the ungodly, or to precipitate the mind into a state of alarm. In the language of the prophet, it is to "cry aloud, and spare not:" it is to exhibit the terrors of Mount Sinai, or an approaching judgment. Such addresses have, by a divine blessing, been instrumental to the saving conversion of thousands; but I think the final sentence or period of such conclusions ought to cherish hope. The whole sermon blows an alarm; but the third part, if thrown

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into the form of a peroration (p. 115 and 116) is well worth the study of a preacher. It is difficult to conceive any thing more terrific. The fact respecting a French preacher who painted the day of judgment, and brought it so close to the imagination of the hearers that they all at once started from their seats and cried out, is well known.

No. 33.—I need only add here a short extract from Saurin on Heb. xii. 29.

How often have we represented to you the dreadful consequences of your delays? We would take you to witness, ye walls of the church, if you were capable of giving evidence. But you shall be our witnesses, ye discourses preached here! a remembrance of which shall be awakened in that great day, when our hearers shall give an account of the use they have made of them! Consciences! you shall be our witnesses. You have heard our directions; you yourselves shall be our witnesses. Gainsayers! you who have so often pretended, by reversing the ideas which the gospel gives us of the mercy of God, to obscure others which it gives of its mercy and vengeance; we ourselves must and will witness against you, ere the flames of hell seize upon you.

There are innumerable passages in Alleine's and Baxter's works, many in Davies, and other authors of this character, that might suggest conclusions, although such passages do not stand in the rank of conclusions.

As it is impossible to point out all the different kinds of address which may be adopted, I shall content myself with having exemplified the most important, and close this article by very briefly remarking on two or three others: such as

### THE TENDER OR COMPASSIONATE.

This kind turns on the feelings of the preacher's own mind in reference to the subject in hand as when Jeremiah

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thus expresses himself (ch. xiii. 17), "But, if ye will not hear my message, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep sore and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive." Again: "O that mine head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people. O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men," &c.: ch. ix. 1, 2, &c.

THE INDIGNANT.

There are a great many perorations of this kind. The feeling intended to be described is that which Jacob felt when he uttered his comment on the character of Simeon and Levi, Gen. xlix. 6: "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united," &c.

THE ABRUPT.

This peroration may sometimes have a very happy effect.

No. 34.—Davies, on 2 Chron. xxxii. 25. "Hezekiah's ingratitude."

It need afford you no surprise if my subject overwhelms me, so as to disable me from making a formal application of it: I leave you to your own thoughts upon it, and I am apt to think they will constrain you to cry out, in a consternation with me, O! the amazing, horrid, base, unprecedented ingratitude of man! And, O! the amazing, free, rich, overflowing, infinite, unprecedented goodness of God! Let these two miracles be the wonder of the whole universe.

It is said of Bucholtzer that he often closed his sermons designedly in a terse, abrupt manner.

Here, my brethren! I stop, and leave the Holy Spirit to preach to you.—Now, Christians! I have done my part, may the Lord condescend to do his in your hearts!—I

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have planted and watered; may God give the increase!—I have been preaching to you, and setting before you the gospel of salvation; may the Lord God apply it to your hearts, for his glory and your eternal felicity! May the Lord set home to your hearts what I have been preaching! For my part I am only his messenger to you; he is the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls!

With some one such sentence he frequently concluded his discourse. "The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the Master of assemblies:" Eccles. xii. 11.

### THE TEXTUAL.

If any of the former classes require an apology, this I am sure requires none.

No. 35.—Farquhar, p. 105, on Ps. lxxiii. 28. "The advantages of devotion." He says,

I shall conclude with two passages of Scripture that are much to our present purpose, and serve to show the unconquerable power of piety amidst the greatest calamities. The former is David's triumph in the midst of public danger and distress. Ps. xlvi. 1—7: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble," &c. The other is the conclusion of Habakkuk's hymn: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Thus blessed is the man, O God, whom thou causest to approach to thee! To *God* therefore let us draw near with a true heart, and in full assurance of faith.

No. 36.—The same author, on Matt. xxii. 39—"The love of our neighbour"—very appropriately concludes by quoting Col. iii. 12—14.

"Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved,

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thus expresses kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, hear my mes forbearing one another, and forgiving one your pri any man have a quarrel against any; even as with forgave you, so also do ye: and, above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Here permit me to suggest that there may be now and then great propriety in concluding with the words of the text on which your discourse is founded, uttered with great solemnity and emphasis, without any note whatever.

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# LECTURE XXXVI.

## COMMENT.

THE general inadequacy of theories to effect the purposes contemplated by them, has thrown their authors into considerable discredit, and the very name of a *theorist* connects with it little to the honour of his understanding. Whether a scheme be *originated* or only *revived*, it must therefore be examined solely by its practical results.

If the system does not *work well*, as the modern phrase is, but still contains in it much that promises to be beneficial to society, nothing can be more clearly a duty than the endeavour to find out the cause of this partial failure, and the application of the appropriate remedy. Perhaps some new power may be applied to make the scheme work better: if this can be done, all the better, for amendment is preferable to a total breaking up and abandonment; hence *reform* is the favourite theme of the day.

The plan laid down and recommended by Claude for the due regulation of public discourses appears to possess the elements of great usefulness. I have endeavoured, in my work, to exhibit this plan fairly, and have made some additions to it; and I have shown, I think, that this plan is capable of improvement. But does our system of public preaching now require further reform? I answer, without hesitation, It does call for further reform; there is still something wanting, which must be supplied before it can



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be efficient, before we can hopefully look for a revival of religion. It is not learning, for learning has increased, till, like house-property, it has fallen in value; nor is it talent in the ministry, for talent goes a begging; nor is it moral character, for this exists in the ministry to an extent that will bear comparison with former periods; nor is there, generally speaking, a departure from the purity of Christian doctrine, for just views of truth are the glory of our age, and are found where once they were lamentably deficient: there is also a fair attendance on gospel ordinances; but, alas! to an alarming degree, all this settles in little better than mere formality. "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power;" and this, if lost, must be restored. Defect in preaching does exist. The very excellent Dr. Fletcher bears me out in this statement. In his Sermon on a Revival of Religion, lately published, he says: "I shrink not from the avowal, solemn and affecting as is the responsibility which I feel in making it, that a careless, inadequate, unimpressive, or, on any great points, defective ministration of divine truth, is, of all other causes, most conducive to a declining state of things in the church of God; and that indifference, error, worldly conformity, and other indications of declension, are closely connected with the tone and character of ministerial instruction." Dr. Fletcher has not been contradicted. The Doctor's remarks refer not to the publication of error, nor of ignorance in publishing the truth, but to something wanting to give due advantage to the Gospel. And if all the rules given for raising the character of sermons were observed and acted upon, still the complaint would remain. Every friend of divine truth will say, "That the unction of the Holy Spirit is wanting in a fuller degree than has been in our times yet experienced, to give life and energy to the preacher to affect the hearts of the hearers, and to accomplish that which learning and correct rules never can, even in such a measure as we in our times may expect, and which

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is comprehended in the promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." "This is equivalent to saying, "I will, by my Spirit, ever be with you, to assist you in your work, and to impart such energy to my gospel, that no opposing powers shall prevent its ultimate success." Hence, until the blessed Spirit shall again visit our churches with a richer effusion of his gracious influences; until ministers shall feel that influx of language which the Spirit only can suggest, we must continue constant in prayer and supplication. We must study a *language* the most likely to impress the heart, while learning and rules will enlighten the understanding and direct the judgment. We will not throw off the aids of learning for enriching the mind, but we must also find a language that will seize the affections, the passions, and the senses of the audience. Expositions, propositions, with their auxiliaries and adjuncts, constitute the machinery of the understanding; peculiar language opens the avenues of the heart. Then the Christian character stands out fairly before us: not a religion of the head merely, nor of the heart merely, but a happy combination of both. And He who formed the man, and knew that both the understanding and the affections must be equally influenced in the important work of salvation, has made these two capacities capable of combinations and of co-operation to that end; and whenever we see a want of this junction, or the one affected without the other, we see to a certainty an imperfect character; and in many instances this may be traced to imperfect or defective preaching.

The kind of language to be contended for is to be found in the sacred Scriptures, and in the works of men who have most closely followed the divine method. The careful study of the Scriptures, with a direct view to the subject of this essay, will satisfy any man that He who formed the heart was acquainted with the avenues to it. There is no language that distils into the heart like Scripture lan-



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guage; it has a point and an address which words fail to describe: the language is aided by circumstances which gave occasion to the language, so that we have the fittest time, the fittest means, and the fittest words. In Nathan's interview with David, after his unhappy fall, you have a fine exemplification of my principle; as also in the prophet Daniel when standing before Belshazzar: in both instances you see how the circumstances aided the strong language of the messengers of God. There is, also, as I have said, a strength of language to be found in human authors, at least in some of them, as well as in some pulpits, exceedingly well calculated to strike the heart with the force of truth. This is matter of fact; and when we are looking for a revival of religion, we must look to these resources for language to promote such a revival. With regard to the printed works of Christian divines, I would especially refer to the "land of revivals," America. I ask, Is not the powerful language of Davies and Payson calculated to affect the heart? Have not these and men of kindred spirits done much in effecting such revivals? These points must be conceded. To come nearer home, I might refer to Walker of Edinburgh, and South in our own land, with many others. Here we have patterns before us, while Scripture will be always at hand to supply any thing in which they happen to have been deficient. Such men as I have referred to had in them the very elements of *comment*—strong feeling, delicate sensibility, and both united with a sound judgment. Of South, indeed, we must say that he was too much a party-man, that he laboured under strong prejudices against the Puritans, and that we should therefore read him with caution; with these allowances, he was a giant in language, and that without the aid of Græcisms, Latinisms, or any other disfigurements of style, all which, like a descendant of the bold Saxon race, he despised. Walker, in his own country, was a prodigy: he seems to have drank deeply into the spirit of his coun-

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tryman, John Knox, though he was politer by two hundred years; and, while the great body of his countrymen were actively engaged in cultivating the understanding, he undertook a task, equally arduous, by the language of power to raise the soul to action, and by his own deep and hallowed feelings to stir up those of his hearers. Blair learned something from Walker; the best parts of his sermons are his imitations of Walker; but not having equally strong feelings, he fell short. Not having been so deeply "baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire," of course there is little corresponding to this in his writings; but there is a borrowed excellence, and even this is of value. I make this last remark to encourage young preachers to the closest imitation of such excellent men. Let such wait at the pool till the waters are moved, and then they may obtain a baptism that shall give them the eloquence of the heart.

If these views be correct, we see what must constitute a material part of ministerial occupations; and if the Spirit's work is with the heart as well as the understanding; if "the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things which were spoken by Paul," will he not be most likely to co-operate with such language from the preacher as is best fitted to the purpose? And if the gracious Spirit move towards a people by the intimation of his love, may we not suppose that he will move the preacher toward them in the same way? If so, then we have the cause of the great success of such preachers as throw themselves in the way of such divine influences—being in the way the Lord Jesus leads the preacher to success. Thus the apostles went forth, "preaching every where," no doubt in the heartfelt language which they had learned from their Master, and we are informed, "the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word with signs following;" Mark xvi. 20.

In accordance with these views the people will go where they can be affected, where they can be made to feel; this will ever be the case with the many; and though such as-

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saults on the heart, to those who are completely wedded to sin, and are determined to go after idols, may be unpleasant, yet such persons will go again and again; they may indeed say, The man "speaks parables;" he is speaking of some other persons, and not of us; still, I say, they will hear such addresses, and will repeat their visits even in spite of themselves.

There ever have been great numbers of persons for whose Christian character we can say but little, who nevertheless are in the habit of attending on the ministry of the word; these, from their want of education, are not capable of appreciating a teaching sermon, or an elegant composition; they are not intellectual enough to taste an intellectual feast; but they will go where they can be powerfully affected, where the preacher chooses acceptable words that harmonize with their feelings, that touch the tender strings of their hearts, that melt or burn; where they can hear something that will recal the thoughts of their hearts, and lay them open to view, though long forgotten; where the preacher, from his acquaintance with the workings of the human heart, is enabled to disclose things which they supposed to be known only to themselves. Such preaching attracts the many; and the impulse gains strength from the many that go to the same place. Now, as the kingdom of heaven is likened to a net, and the preacher to a net-thrower, what is so likely as that some will be caught in the gospel-net where such numbers surround the boat? Is there any thing so likely to engage the affections of the people? And upon this, in a great measure, depends success. It is true, this is often proved to be a precarious property; it is not to be sought as an end, for its own sake; I have spoken against this in the preceding Lectures; yet without the affections of the people very little will be done. The mere sanction of office, and ministerial arguments, if alone, will not effect the object. The people will, in this case, bear the faithful remonstrances and the occasional

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severity of the man whom they love. Convinced that the preacher has in view their eternal welfare, they will say, "Master, say on." "The reprover shall afterwards find more favour than he that flattereth with his tongue;" Prov. xxviii. 23. But this is best secured where love is evident in the speaker.

Add to all these considerations the example of Christ. His language concentrated in it every thing that could engage the attention and improve the heart. (See his Sermon on the Mount, his Discourse at Nazareth, &c. and mark his energetic language to the Jews, John v., vi., vii.) Every thing he said, and every thing he did, was calculated to move as well as to teach; to correct as well as to inform.

In short, pungent language, like powerful medicines, can alone produce the desired effect upon the decayed mental and moral constitution of men; there must be something to produce "searchings of heart." Thus the roused spirit of man becomes as "the candle of the Lord," searching all the inward parts of the belly, "or soul;" Prov. xx. 27.

I am fully aware, that this kind of address will, by some, be calumniated. If it sting, it will be called declamation; if it touch the tender feelings of the heart, it will be called cant, a play upon the feelings of weak-minded people, a mode to gain a party; and it is well if the preacher does not get the amiable appellation of hypocrite, or on the other hand be called a caricaturist, a severe ascetic fellow, a libeller of human nature, a man of many words but no meaning. Well, be it so; but if preachers do not speak to the heart, the Scripture will do it, and the day of judgment will confirm every faithful word; and if the privileges and enjoyments of those who through grace have believed, are not to be expatiated upon in language calculated to penetrate the heart, it is likely we shall soon settle again

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into a sleepy state, and shall only be awaked when calamity approaches or death stares us in the face.

Therefore, as a means of raising the standard of preaching, that it may not be the mere lullaby of a sleepy audience, I recommend *commental* or strong language, to give force and energy to thought, to transfuse breath into sermons, that they may live; that they may be replete with light and heat; that they may be as a hammer breaking the rocky hearts in pieces; or like the "sharp two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, being a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Under such sermons sinners will be led to cry out, "What shall we do to be saved?" the sorrowful and contrite spirit shall be comforted; the Saviour shall be set forth in his glorious offices and grace; and the feet of the weary wanderer shall be directed into the "paths of wisdom," which are "pleasantness and peace."

This commental language has the singular recommendation that it is both classical and popular. Milton's Paradise Lost is classical but not popular; Robert Hall is profound and reasoning, but not popular; he requires a mind as capacious as his own to comprehend him fully: but comment has a superscription on it which all understand, and which all are glad to call their own. It carries its direct appeal alike to the understanding and to the conscience. It brings light and conviction; it animates or soothes; and shows the very form and feature of things, as to what is odious or amiable, advantageous or baneful. It throws off all disguises; it exalts what should be exalted, and debases what should be laid prostrate in the dust. It enables the preacher to throw his whole soul into the bosom of the hearer. It commands all things, but submits to nothing. It supersedes no other kind of excellence in public speaking, but assists every one of them. Whatever peculiarity of

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talent the preacher may possess, that will impress additional value upon it. In short, it is always great in itself; it has a dignity that none will dispute; and a range of operations as wide as the feelings of human nature extend. It brings the speaker into association with all that is excellent in the pulpit, at the bar, and in the senate. As the Holy Scriptures are full of all excellence, they stand preeminent in the justest comment; and that Divine Spirit that indicted those Scriptures, will ever be disposed to promote its success.

I shall be fully borne out by references which I shall adduce; and the testimony of our own experience, whenever we have listened to its accents, will go to establish the truth of my observations. Where have we ever seen popularity without it? Where did we ever see the crowded church to listen to the mere expounder, however excellent? What issue is to be expected of the mere logical reasoner? What flights of oratory were ever known to succeed if unmixed with comment? What annunciations of truth ever bore sway without this language of nature and of sentiment? The facts recorded in the evangelical history, and in the Acts of the Apostles, fully show its potency. When Paul reasoned (commented) before Felix, the guilty judge trembled. When Peter commented upon the vile conduct of Simon Magus, the wretch cried for mercy. When the same apostle commented upon the wickedness of the Jews in crucifying the Prince of life, three thousand were cut to the heart. It is true, all gracious and saving effects are to be attributed to the agency of the Holy Spirit; but it is agreeable to the divine appointment that human means should be employed; and of all the means that can be brought to bear on this point, that of striking and forcible language is the most efficient.

From such a representation of the subject, some will be ready to suppose there are insurmountable difficulties in



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this branch of their work. If only great men have been successful here, how shall inferiors hope? At first it may be difficult; but if you have strong Christian feeling, and a holy zeal for the honour of your Master and the interests of his kingdom, all will become easy. Powerful feeling will produce powerful language. In the late political struggle for a Reformed Parliament, every one, from the highest to the lowest grade in society, felt the liveliest interest, either for or against that measure, and in other cases the expression corresponded to the feeling. When any one sustains an injury, how readily and forcibly he expresses his sentiments! nay, even the gentler sex, who occupy not pulpits, can sometimes be very eloquent and powerful when deeply interested and highly excited. How, then, shall it be difficult for the Christian minister to assume a style and language becoming his situation as an advocate in the cause of truth, and an ambassador of the King of kings?

Of all the matters that relate to what we denominate *direct address* to the audience, *comment* is the most appropriate. It is the very "form and feature" of personality; not in the offensive sense of the term, but in that of *direct contact*, bringing the speaker and the hearer into close quarters, as the sailors term it, not with a design to injure, but to assist and edify those who are willing to be instructed. So Nicodemus was brought into close contact with the blessed Redeemer in the conversation recorded in the third chapter of John. In several parts of this work I have referred to the subject of Comment, and have endeavoured to show its specific uses and applications; but I scarcely know of any kind of pulpit address in which it might not take its part with certain success; for whatever dish (to employ a homely comparison) is brought to table, there should be appropriate seasoning. Now if, to obtain this, we must travel to foreign climes (though I hope this

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is not absolutely necessary; there surely are some worthy examples among us if they might be named in this place), I would not send you to Germany, already ruined, in a religious view, by a system of false emanative philosophy; nor to the phlegmatic Dutch, nominally more orthodox as to *doctrine*, but cold as their icy waters; but I must send you to the land of revivals—to our brother Jonathan's country, of which we have heard so much, and a great part of which is true. Revivals there were the fruits of an energetic ministry. There the pattern is before us. Our younger brother Jonathan outstrips his elder brother John, and leaves a space between that tells a tale which perhaps we do not like to hear; yet, I say, if we can learn any thing from the western side of the Atlantic, let us not be sullen in wrong, but endeavour to correct our errors by their example. We will cherish a holy emulation with America. Their zeal shall not totally eclipse ours. "Britain! with all thy faults I love thee still!" Thy stars have been obscured by a dense atmosphere, but they shall shine forth again with increased lustre; thy ministers shall resume a tone of power and influence suited to thy exigency. Some more talented author than he who now assumes the task shall strike out a more direct path of improvement; and we will not cease to pray that God "the Father of light," will vouchsafe to such well-directed efforts his special blessing. We will not cease to pray—"Thy kingdom come;" that the "Spirit may be poured on us from on high;" and that, as the result, the "wilderness may become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest."

The plan upon which I shall proceed in treating of this subject is as follows:

I. Show the true nature of Comment.

II. Illustrate the subject by examples.

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I. The nature of Comment. *Commentum* is an old word transferred to new purposes. According to the old Latin dictionary it signifies "a device, a fiction, a feigned story." Strange as it may appear, the Fathers of the church adopted the word, but changed its signification, applying it to an exposition of the Scriptures, or annotations upon them. Blackstone calls his Dissertations on the Laws of England "Commentaries." Of late years it has been adopted at the bar and in the senate. Our daily political publications have also availed themselves of it in expressing their approbation or disapprobation of public men and public measures. When Comment is employed in these ways it signifies the expression of an idea in the very strongest language that words arranged together are capable of forming. Thus, in the history of a word, we see what changes take place, as well as in the general style of our country. It seems a strange anomaly for Comment to come round to what it has from what it once was. Just so with the word *watering-place*. When I was young it meant a place where we watered our horses; now it signifies a place of dissipation, where the idle gentry and foolish trades-people go to spend their money and learn new vices. However, usage has given a sanction to the modern use of the word Comment, and we shall take considerable liberty with it, agreeably to the ideas thrown out in my introduction to the present article. It will serve as a radix or root of a vine, the various branches of which we can train to our liking in all directions, and which we hope will be both fruitful and ornamental. We could not take a name from any of its branches, because it would be inadequate, though most pleasing to our usual ideas. The word will soon become familiar. It is only necessary to separate our ideas of it in general from exposition, explication, and every similar term. But as there is no rule without exception, even expositions may, if so designed,

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be conducted by it, which I shall illustrate hereafter by examples.

Further, to explain the term, let it be observed that every thing in morals and religion has its right and wrong. Every sentiment may fall into truth or error. Every thing possesses certain characteristic qualities. Every speaker that feels intensely for the divine honour has here a "message from God" to speak, whether in censure or approbation. The speaker's mind here fixes itself on such qualities or properties, and, making the subject his own, calls together all the strongest expressions that his intense feelings can summon for the occasion, taking care at the same time to compare such qualities of actions or sentiments with the word of God, attending, above all things, to what the Scriptures say as the rule of his speech.

The qualities of things contained in the sacred volume are all subject to the influence of Comment in some of its kinds: the field is thus as wide as the world, as expansive as that divine truth which is "settled in the heavens." It is the expression of impassioned sentiments and the pathos of the mind. Comment assumes every kind of form, just as occasion requires; the cheerful, the grave; the indulgent, the severe; the commendatory, the indignant; the argumentative, the contemplative; carrying the language with point and effect to every case. Though simple in itself, it mostly requires the elements of representation or narration, to bring it to bear upon its point. Instance the striking address of Joseph to his brethren, which I call pure comment: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Again, the expression of Esau on the conduct of Jacob: "Is he not rightly called Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright, and behold, now he hath taken away my blessing." It is the power of eloquence; it is the final touch of the artist's pencil. The

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outline must first be traced (the stating of the subject), the lights and shades are to be marked (definition and description); still something is wanting; the skilful artist then throws in his natural colouring, and does that for the picture which judicious comment does for the discourse—give it *expression* and *effect*. So Mr. Fletcher of Madeley says, in his portraiture of St. Paul: "The essence of painting consists in a happy disposition of light and shade, from the contrast of which an admirable effect is produced, and the animated figure is made to rise from the canvas." Comment is not a mere invention, but it agrees with the experience of every age, and every nation: and what is most to the point, it is sanctioned by the Scriptures of truth, and is well calculated to affect the mind, to restrain, or to urge forward in reference to divine things, as the preacher's duty and good sense may dictate.

Let it be further observed, that comment may find a place in any part of a discourse, and sometines in every part. For instance, I might expound John iii. 19: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light," &c. I might give the meaning of this figurative language, and of the terms employed. I might prove the truth of the text by matter of fact, and afterwards confirm the statements by parallel passages of Scripture, and by reference to Scripture history. But here comment might be introduced. I should express my own sentiments about it; as, that it is a most censurable and abhorrent perversity of human nature to contemn the light so graciously bestowed, and be determined to go to hell in the dark; to hazard all that is dear and valuable by adhering to the most evil deeds, &c. Now if, I say, I express no such feelings and sentiments of my own, to whatever length I may go in explaining and amplifying, though to as many sermons as would fill a volume, it would be *comparatively* labour lost; but the proper introduction of comment would give unspeakable advantage

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to such a discourse; and it is owing to the absence of this necessary ingredient, that so many sermons, otherwise excellent, fail to produce on the audience any adequate effect. The division of a sermon may be elegant, and its enlargement just, yet there are other excellencies to be introduced to entitle it to the meed of unqualified praise. By means of comment the truth or falsehood, justice or injustice, reasonableness or absurdity, dignity or meanness, suitability or incongruity, of any sentiment or action, is to be exhibited. In short, whatever is lovely or unlovely, excellent or odious, dignified or contemptible, furnishes a proper opening for the expression of our feelings of delight or detestation, admiration or astonishment.

When comment is intended to occupy a conspicuous place, there must be a preparation for it, and the ideas of the sermon must be raised for such admissions. For instance, Jay's Sermons, vol. i., p. 250, on Amos vi. 1.

I. Some are at ease in Zion from selfish insensibility.

II. Some are at ease in Zion from infidel presumption.

III. Some are at ease in Zion from vain confidence.

IV. Some are at ease in Zion from practical indifference.

Here is a complete preparation for the comments that Jay designed, and every point is indicated admirably, and quite suited to the purpose.

Indeed, nothing is more common than for authors to raise a subject for no other purpose than to introduce comment. For instance: the History of England has by several been written with the express view of commending or reprobating parties and leaders of parties, or their opinions and sentiments in relation to governments, whether of the monarchical or popular kind. The lives of popular characters have been written, and imaginary ones introduced, with the same design. In all these cases, authors dress up their characters to their own taste, and comment upon them accordingly. They hold up *these* to admiration, *those* to

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contempt. In this view of the subject, we see a man may be a benefactor of mankind, or a mischievous demon. With this powerful auxiliary, the Christian minister will be as an angel of light—the mirror of truth and rectitude. He will "set down nought in malice." Christian charity will direct every sentence, and the glory of God and the benefit of man will be the result.

Still the nature of comment will be best understood by the following examples, and all that I can say in its praise is but holding a dim taper to the unclouded light of the sun.

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## EXAMPLES OF COMMENT.

### EULOGISTIC.

*Example* 1.—Owen, on the Holy Scriptures.

Some find fault with the Scriptures because divine truths are not thrown together in regular order as in our catechisms. But God puts not such value on men's accurate methods as they imagine them to deserve. Nor are they subservient to his ends in the revelation of himself, as they are apt to fancy. Yet often when they think they have brought truths into the strictest propriety of expression and order, they lose both their power and their glory. Hence is the world filled with so many lifeless, sapless, graceless, artificial declarations of divine truth, in the schoolmen and others. We may sooner squeeze water out of a pumice-stone than one drop of spiritual nourishment out of them. How many millions of souls have received divine benefit and consolation exactly suited to their condition by those occasional occurrences of divine truth which they meet with in the Scriptures, and which they would never have ob-

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tained by those wise artificial arrangements which some men would fancy! Truths have their efficacy and power in our minds, not only from themselves, but from their *place* and *position* in the Scriptures. They are placed in such respects towards us, and in such connexion one with another, as their influence upon our minds depends on. Artificial methodizing of spiritual truths may make men ready in notions, cunning and subtle in disputation; but it is the Scripture itself in its own present arrangement "which is able to make us wise unto salvation."—*Owen on the Spirit*, quoted by Mr. Bickersteth, pp. 100, 101.

*Example* 2.—Idem, on the incomparable simplicity of Scripture divinity.

When we read human authors we are sometimes bewildered in the multiplicity of words. There is a lucid perspicuity in the Bible. Here we see divine truth clearly. The light shines bright and full. "*Whatever maketh manifest is light*," and the holy Scripture is like a great flood of pure light poured forth on a dark world, and the true source of its illumination and glory. You have often the sublime, but all is the eloquence of simplicity, the grandeur of sentiment [*Comment*] and not of mere words. How wonderful is the simplicity of our Lord's character and discourses!—There are no syllogisms or corollaries drawn with subtle art to perplex and puzzle the mind; but there are throughout sublime truths, adapted alike to instruct and edify, exalt and purify—calculated to improve the lowest intellect, and to exercise the highest.

*Example* 3.—Walker, on Rom. viii. 32: "God spared not his own Son."

Amazing words! The God in whom we live and move; —the Father of our spirits, and the former of our bodies; —who possessed an eternity of happiness and glory before we began to exist, and can neither be enriched by our services, nor impoverished by the want of them: he, whose goodness we abused by the vilest ingratitude; whose

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omnipotence we defied by the most insolent rebellion:—even *that God* who spared not the angels that sinned, but hath reserved them in everlasting chains, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day, vouchsafed to pity and to spare the children of men; nay, to make way for the exercise of this distinguishing mercy, he spared not his own Son, the Lord of angels, the Creator of the worlds; but, having substituted him in our place, clothed him with our nature, and laid upon him the iniquities of us all, he delivered him up to contempt and persecution, to agony and torture, to death and the grave:—and all this for our benefit, to redeem us from everlasting misery, and to reinstate us in the happiness and glory we had forfeited. These are some of the marvellous doings of the Lord, which the apostle here celebrates with gratitude and wonder, as the grounds of our faith, and hope, and joy.

*Example* 4.—S. Clarke, on Acts xi. 24: "For he was a good man, &c."

I can conceive of no higher eulogium than is expressed in these words. Nothing in nature is more amiable than the character of a truly good man; a man whose principal business and pleasure is to make all men easy with whom he has any concern in the present life; and to promote, as far as in him lies, their happiness likewise in that which is to come. Other qualifications have their value; and do, in their proportion, merit a just degree of esteem. Great knowledge and abilities every where necessarily command respect. Great actions never fail to fill men with admiration, and to procure applause. But of all characters that of goodness is the most lovely, and approaches nearest to the similitude of a divine perfection. God is the fountain of goodness, from which flows all the happiness in the whole creation; and there is no one perfection in the divine nature which it is so much our duty and our glory to imitate.

In commenting upon the excellencies of good men you

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must be on your guard lest you exceed the just bounds of truth and soberness; but when the works of God in creation, providence, or grace, are the subjects of your comment, no caution of this kind is needed; our sentiments and feelings, when expressed in the strongest manner, will here fall infinitely short of the truth. A pious mind will often break forth in this kind of comment. Hence the many instances contained particularly in the Psalms—see viii. 3, 4, &c.; xxxi. 19; xlv., lxv., lxxxiv., xc., xcii., cxxxix., &c. The works of Romaine abound with specimens, from which the following soliloquy is selected:

*Example* 5.—Romaine's Walk of Faith, chap. v.

Meditate, O my soul, upon the wonders which divine love has wrought for thee and thy salvation. Review the many, many mercies of thy past life; and consider that thou art called to walk this day with *thy* God. What a privilege is this! He is thy God, and thou art his adopted son. What an honour has he conferred on thee! He has taken thee into the most noble family, yea, into the divine household of faith. He has permitted thee to walk with him as thy father. He has appointed the way, promised to be with thee in it, and at every moment, and at every step, to be doing thee good. There can be no happiness superior to this upon the earth. Prize it, for it is inestimable: enjoy it, for it is heaven begun. Walking with God by faith is present enjoyment of him, and will infallibly bring thee to the end of thy journey, to full and everlasting enjoyment.

The preacher will have great occasion and many opportunities of introducing comments of this class. That in Walker, on Rom. viii. 32. Sacred poesy furnishes an immense variety here. There is a beautiful instance in Milton's fifth book, which is fresh in the memory of most people as the song of our first parents in Paradise, while yet in innocence:—

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These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
Almighty! Thine this universal frame,
Thus wondrous fair: thyself how wondrous then!
Unspeakable! who sittest above these heavens,
To us invisible, or dimly seen
In these thy lowest works; yet these declare
Thy goodness beyond thought, and power divine.
Speak, ye who best can tell, ye sons of light,
Angels; for ye behold him, and with songs
And choral symphonies, day without night,
Circle his throne rejoicing; ye in heaven,
On earth, join all ye creatures, to extol
Him first, him last, him midst, and without end.

When a preacher recites one or more of such passages, in a suitable part of his discourse, he adds a jewel of great value.

*Example* 6.—Davies, on 1 John iv. 8.

Love is a gentle, pleasing theme, the noblest passion of the human breast, and the purest ornament of rational nature. Love is the cement of society and source of social happiness; and without it the great community of the rational universe would dissolve, and men and angels would become savages, and roam apart in barbarous solitude. Love is the spring of every pleasure; for who would take pleasure in the possession of what he dares not love? Love is the foundation of religion and morality; for what is more monstrous than religion without love to that God who is the object of it? Who can perform social duties without feeling the endearments of those relations to which they belong? Love is the softener and polisher of human minds, and transforms barbarians into men; its pleasures are refined and delicate, and even its pains and anxieties have something in them soothing and pleasing. In a word, love is the brightest beam of divinity that has ever irradiated the creation, the nearest resemblance to the ever-blessed God, for "*God is love.*" * * * * * *

Let me, therefore, commence advocate for God with my

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fellow-men, though it strikes me with horror to think that there should be any occasion for it. Ye children of the most tender Father, ye subjects of the most gracious and righteous Sovereign, ye beneficiaries of Divine Love, why do ye harbour hard thoughts of him? Is it because his laws are so strict, and tolerate you in no guilty pleasure? this appointment is the kind restraint of love: the love of so good a being will not allow him to dispense with your observance of any thing that may in its own nature contribute to your improvement and advantage, nor indulge you in any thing that is in its own nature deadly and destructive, no more than a father will suffer a favourite child to play with a viper, or a good government permit a man to roam at large armed with weapons to destroy himself and others. Do you think it hard of God, because he hates all moral evil to such a degree, that he has annexed to it everlasting misery of the most exquisite kind?—you may as well complain of the constitution of nature that renders abstinence from poison necessary to the preservation of health, or that does not allow you to quench your thirst, in a fever, with cold water, &c.

*Example* 7—South, on the divine goodness.

1. Begin with inanimate creation—look over the whole universe, and you shall find no part of it but hath its peculiar beauty and ornament. So that the Greek word κοσμος (cosmos), which signifies the *world*, signifies also dress and ornament, as if the world were nothing else but a great union and collection of all unions and perfections. The sun (the Psalmist tells us) comes every day dressed and adorned like a bridegroom out of his chambers of the east; he casts abroad a lustre too glorious to behold: it is enough that we can see it second-hand by reflection. Nor can the night itself conceal the glories of heaven; but the moon and the stars, those deputed lights, then show forth their lesser beauties: then the astronomer watches his opportunities of gazing on the firmament. And then, if we

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consider the earth and the sea, we should find them like two inexhaustible store-houses, exhibiting the riches of nature in boundless unmeasured plenty, a plenty ennobled by two excellencies, fulness and regularity; so that the whole system of the world is but a standing copy and representation of the divine goodness, writing little images of itself upon every, the least, part and portion of this great page.

2. To proceed further, to plants and vegetables, which have a little higher advance of perfection, and enjoy something like life, that is, something that is enough to make them grow and flourish. "*Consider the lilies* (says our Saviour), how they grow; they toil not, they spin not, and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." We read in the 30th verse of God's clothing the grass. We see these in the gayest livery of the great Lord, all the blessed influences of heaven and earth concurring to preserve and freshen their beauty; and thus, by the *tender* mercies of the great Father, there is not the least flower but seems to hold up its head and look pleasantly, in the secret sense of the goodness of its heavenly Maker. . . . And even when these seem to perish, or wither and die, and at last bury themselves in the bowels of the same earth that bore them; why then the same providence vouchsafes them a resurrection, and a return to life—securing perpetuity, succession in the exactest order of the first creation, and thereby giving them some resemblance of an immortality, so far as the proportions of their nature will admit.

3. The sensible part of the creation, in the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, among which we shall find even the chiefest and the strongest of constant retainers and pensioners of heaven. Even the lion seeks his meat from God: Ps. civ. 31.

We see every creature possessed of a power most particularly to pursue that which makes for the welfare of its being! Where God denies strength, he usually gives sagacity and quickness of sense, and withal

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implants a certain instinct that searches and prompts it to make use of that faculty in which the chief ability is seated. The ox is sufficiently conscious of its horns, the mastiff of its teeth; the little bird has not strength to grapple with the hawk, but it has agility to escape him. The helpless lamb has neither strength nor wing, yet its great usefulness procures it protection from its owner.

4. Proceed we now one step further, and take a survey of rational creatures—men and angels. And first of man, who is (as it were) an epitome or rather an union of the two worlds; as by his body relating to the earth, and by his soul to heaven: nothing can more declare the goodness of his Creator to him than that he made him *after his own image*.

But passing over the bounty of God to man in his state of innocence, as not sufficiently to be expressed by any since the loss of it, I shall remark only those blessings and favours which men, ever since the fall and apostasy of *Adam*, seem to enjoy upon the mere stock of the common blessings of Providence, which we find, as to all the outward materials of happiness, makes no discrimination between the good and the bad, but causeth the sun and the rain to visit the vineyard as well when it is *Ahab's* as while it was *Naboth's*.

Scripture history and observation prove, independent of all uses and improvement or misuse, that God is *good to all*, &c.; that the benignity of Providence seems to be promiscuous and universal, and as undistinguishing as the elements, which equally dispense themselves to the necessities of all. . . . In this sense, we cannot but judge it an instance of strange and almost invincible goodness, for a prince to clothe his rebels in scarlet, and to make his traitors fare deliciously every day; yet the wicked and profane ones of the world, who stand in the same defiance of the majesty and supremacy of Heaven, are

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treated with as great obligingness and favour by him whom they so defy.

And besides, how many are the casual and unforeseen dangers that the hand of Providence rescues them from! how many little things carry in them the causes of death, and how often are men that have escaped been amazed that they were not destroyed! which shows that there is an eye that still watches over them, that always sees, though it is not seen; that knows their strength and their weaknesses, where they are safe and when they may be struck, and in how many respects they lie open to the invasion of sad accidents; and though it be ten to one but in the space of a year or two a man so attacked by one or other of those many thousand casualties that he is obnoxious to, yet we see that most do escape, grow old, and do well. In a word, every one lives by a perpetual deliverance, which for the unlikelihood of it he could not expect, so, for his unworthiness, I am sure he could not deserve.

Scripture examples of Eulogistic Comment:—Exod. xv. 1—26; Deut. xxxii. xxxiii.; Judges v.; 1 Sam. ii. 2—9; 2 Sam. i. 17—27; 2 Sam. xxii.; Ps. viii. 1—9; xlv. 72.

### DISLOGISTIC.*

Dislogistic comment is the expression of our feelings or sentiments on whatever is reprehensible or ridiculous; and it is not to be denied that men possessing a talent for comment have usually turned it more frequently to the severe than to the benevolent kind. Hence our British bard took occasion to say,—

> In such a time as this, it is not meet
> That every slight offence should bear its comment.

The angry feelings are but too easily caused, and we have a host of writers that have expressed them very freely.

* See Bailey's Dictionary on the preposition *dis*. "It generally denotes a negation or privation of the noun or verb simply taken, as *dis*-join." Hence our use of the word Dislogistic means the reverse of Logistic, or dispraise.

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With such an arm we must not commit injuries, but, wherever good can be effected, we may use our talent freely and nobly. In the cause of God and truth we need fear no man. We are very sorry that there is so much occasion for this article; but improprieties must be commented upon. Numerous comments of this kind are found in Scripture. That is a most energetic example in Dan. v. 22, &c. Solemn indeed are those found in Matt. xxv. 26—41. Those of Jude are very severe. The addresses to the seven churches, in the second and third chapters of the Revelations, are perfectly appropriate; as are also the comments which open the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Junius has enough of them, and sufficiently poignant. Of divinity authors in this kind we have Sterne and South at the head of the list. The latter on Hab. ii. 12; "Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood," vol. ii., serm. ii., one would think enough to make tyrants tremble.

### *Indignant.*

*Example* 1.—Subject, Christ put to death by the Jews.

The offence committed by Jesus Christ was his reprobating their extortions; for this they plotted against his life, and for this they finally effected his death, by means of a series of atrocities, the least of which would, in the words of the prophet, have made them everlastingly "infamous."* They resorted to the means never made use of but by the basest and most cruel of tyrants: first, they *bribed* one of his followers to *betray* him into their hands; next, they got the aid of the despot and his soldiers; next, having brought him before the judge, they brought, by means of bribes, perjured witnesses to swear against him; having procured his condemnation, in spite of the judge's

* The author here was not exactly correct. See the Supplement to Topic 19.



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conviction of his innocence, and evidently, therefore, by bribery here (also, they put him to the death at once the most cruel and most degrading. Having obtained the sanction of the base and corrupt heathen judge, who, while he called him "*a just person*," and declared that he "found *no fault* in him," and "washed his hands" of the murder, scourged him, and gave him up to be murdered; having obtained the sanction of this bribed and unfeeling hypocrite, and having the swords and pikes of hardened soldiers to protect them against the interference of the just and the humane part of the people; thus sanctioned and thus protected, the malignant and cowardly persecutors, not content with inflicting death, accompanied the infliction with every addition that innate, inveterate, and hellish cruelty could suggest. They put, in mockery, a crown of thorns upon his head, a royal robe over his shoulders, and a reed for a sceptre in his hands; they buffeted him, spat upon him, jibed and reviled him; and having exhausted their ingenuity in the infliction of indignities, and in cannibal-like exultations over the meek, patient, unoffending, and unresisting victim of their malice, they dragged him without the city, and fixed him on the cross by nails driven through his hands and his feet, there to suffer, amidst their still-continued mockery and scoffing, all the pains and anguish of the most cruel death; and, as if all this were not sufficient, they nailed up *two thieves*, one on his right hand, one on his left, in order that, by implication and inference, his memory might rank along with that of the most infamous malefactors.

*Example* 2.—We notice a passage or two from Sterne. I have no veneration for the man, but I think no writer ever gave such correct comments, especially of the severe and cutting kind, except Junius. I refer to his sermon on Luke x. 36: and that the author might give more weight to his comment on an unfeeling heart, he introduces it with a comment on the contrary disposition. He says:—

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There is something in our nature which engages us to take part in every accident to which man is subject, from whatsoever cause it may have happened; but in such calamities as a man has fallen into through mere misfortune, to be charged upon no fault or indiscretion of himself, there is then something so truly interesting, that, at first sight, we generally make them our own. But where the spectacle is uncommonly tragical, and complicated with many circumstances of misery, the mind is taken captive at once, and has no power to make resistance. Against feelings of this kind one would think it were in vain to look for an exception. But there are some minds—how shall I describe them? —formed either of such impenetrable materials, or wrought up by habitual selfishness to such an utter insensibility of what becomes of others, as if they were not partakers of the same nature, or had no lot or connexion at all with the species. Of this character were the Priest and Levite in their conduct to the suffering traveller, half dead by the road side:—"By chance there came down a certain priest!" Merciful God! that a teacher of thy religion should ever want humanity! or that a man whose head might be thought full of the one, should have a heart void of the other! This, however, was the case before us: and this is no fictitious character. Look into the world. How often do you behold a sordid wretch, whose strait heart is open to no man's affliction, taking shelter behind an appearance of piety, and putting on the garb of religion, which none but the merciful have a right to wear!

*Example* 3.—We have some severe comments on *deceit*, in Farquhar, from Ps. xxiv. 3—5.

When I look back into ancient ages, I see almost whole nations of pagans, among whom an oath was a pledge of fidelity scarcely ever broken. Even a dissolute heathen poet, who was favourable to many vices, has expressed the greatest abhorrence of this. How shameful, then, is the



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degeneracy of nations called Christian!—I hail, as the disciple of Jesus, the poorest man who can say, I have lost the world's goods, but, by the grace of God, I have preserved my integrity. Much hast thou gained, happy victor; and insignificant are the toys which thou hast lost. But the man who is wealthy, or powerful, by unjust methods, who has not scrupled to perjure himself, or to involve others in that horrible crime;—my soul, enter not into his secret, dwell not in his habitation: he is a corrupter of the society of men; how detestable must he be in the sight of God!

*Example* 4.—South, Judg. viii. 34, 35.

The author, having shown that the whole creation, and every part of it, is ever *receiving* and *giving*, turns indignant against ungrateful man:—

And now, thou ungrateful brute, thou blemish to mankind and reproach to the creation! what shall we say of thee, or to what shall we compare thee? for thou art an exception from all the visible world: neither the heavens above, nor the earth beneath, afford any thing like thee; and therefore, if thou wouldst find thy parallel, go to hell, which is both the region and the emblem of *ingratitude;* for besides thyself, there is nothing but hell that is always receiving and never restoring. . . . .

Friendship consists properly in mutual offices, and a generous strife in alternate acts of kindness: but he who does an act of kindness to an ungrateful person, sets his seal to a flint, and sows his seed upon the sand; upon the former he makes no impression, and from the latter he finds no production. . . . .

The only language of ingratitude is, *Give, give;* but when the gift is once received, then, like the swine at the trough, it is silent and insatiable. In short, the ungrateful person is a monster which is *all* throat and belly; a kind of thoroughfare or common sewer for the good things of this world to pass into; and of whom, in respect of all kindness conferred on him, may be verified that observation of

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the lion's den, before which appeared the footsteps of many that had gone in thither, but no print of any that ever came out thence. The ungrateful person is the only thing in nature for which nobody living is the better. He lives to himself, and subsists by the good nature of others, of which he himself has not the least grain. He is a mere encroachment upon society, and consequently ought to be thrust out of the world as a pest and a prodigy, and a creature of the devil's making, and not of God's. . . . .

All kindnesses descend upon such a temper as showers of rain, or rivers of fresh water falling into the main: the sea swallows them all, but is not at all changed or sweetened by them . . . Such an one is *kindness-proof*. It is impenetrable, unconquerable,—unconquerable by that which conquers all things else, or only loves itself. Flints may be melted (we see it daily), but an ingrate cannot. "He that is ungrateful will be ungrateful still."

Nothing can be more poignant than this language; one would think that South spoke by experience, that he had some particular person in view, for whose ear or whose eye this severe chastisement was intended. However the picture is not quite a private likeness, it is too general a feature among mankind.

Where comment is sustained upon different points of description or narration, it will receive very considerable aid from contrast and comparison, but particularly the former, as will be exemplified in the following examples. See also the above quotation from Sterne.

*Example* 5.—Junius, letter xiii. To the Duke of Grafton.

If the measures in which you have been most successful had been supported by any tolerable appearance of argument, I should have thought my time not ill employed in continuing to examine your conduct as a minister, and stating it fairly to the public; but when I see questions of the highest national importance carried as they have been, and the first principles of the constitution openly

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violated, without argument or decency, I confess I give up the cause in despair. The meanest of your predecessors had abilities sufficient to give a colour to their measures. If they invaded the rights of the people, they did not dare to offer a direct insult to their understanding; and, in former times, the most venal parliaments made it a condition, in their bargain with the minister, that he should furnish them with some plausible pretences for selling their country and themselves. You have had the merit of introducing a more compendious system of government and logic. You neither addressed yourself to the passions nor to the understanding, but simply to the touch. You apply yourself immediately to the feelings of your friends, who, contrary to the forms of parliament, never enter heartily into a debate until they have divided, &c.

*Example* 6.—Idem, to the Duke of Bedford, vol. i., letter xxi., Sept. 19, 1769.

Your history begins to be important at that auspicious period at which you were deputed to represent the Earl of Bute at the court of Versailles. It was an honourable office, and executed with the same spirit with which it was accepted. Your patrons wanted an ambassador who would submit to make concessions without daring to insist upon any honourable conditions for his sovereign. Their business required a man who had as little feeling for his own dignity as for the welfare of his country; and they found him in the first rank of the nobility. Belleisle, Goree, Guadaloupe, St. Lucia, Martinique, the Fisheries, and the Havanna, are glorious monuments of your grace's talents for negociation. My lord, we are too well acquainted with your pecuniary character to think it possible that so many public sacrifices should have been made without some private compensations. Your conduct carries with it an interior evidence beyond all the legal proofs of a court of justice. Even the callous pride of Lord Egremont was alarmed. He saw and felt his own dishonour in

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corresponding with you; and there certainly was a moment at which he meant to have resisted, had not a fatal lethargy prevailed over his faculties, and carried all sense and memory away with it.

In this example from Junius the comment is rendered more severe by irony and sarcasm, which he was capable of using in the most cutting manner.

Scripture examples of Indignant Comment:—Isa. xiv. Dan. v. 23.

### *Exposure.*

*Example 7.*—Exposure of infidelity. Hall, vol. i., p. 28.

The exclusion of a Supreme Being and of a superintending Providence tends directly to the destruction of taste. It robs the universe of all finished and consummate excellency even in idea. The admiration of perfect wisdom and goodness for which we are formed, and which kindles such unspeakable rapture in the soul, finding in the regions of scepticism nothing to which it corresponds, droops and languishes. In a world which presents a fair spectacle of order and beauty, of a vast family nourished and supported by an Almighty Parent; in a world which leads the devout mind step by step to the contemplation of the first fair and of the first good; the sceptic is encompassed with nothing but obscurity, meanness, and disorder. . . .

Modern infidelity not only tends to corrupt the moral taste, it also promotes the growth of those vices which are the most hostile to social happiness. Of all the vices incident to human nature, the most destructive to society are vanity, ferocity, and unbridled sensuality, and these are precisely the vices which infidelity is calculated to cherish. . .

Besides, as the passions are seldom seen in a simple, unmixed state, so vanity, when it succeeds, degenerates into arrogance; when it is disappointed (and it is often so disappointed), it is exasperated into malignity, and corrupted into envy. In this stage the vain man is a deter-

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mined misanthropist. He detests that excellency which he cannot reach. He detests his species, and longs to be revenged for the unpardonable injustice he has sustained in their insensibility to his merits. He lives upon the calamities of the world: the vices and miseries of men are his element and his food. Virtue, talent, and genius, are his natural enemies, which he persecutes with instinctive eagerness and unrelenting hostility. There are who doubt the existence of such a disposition; but it certainly issues out of the dregs of disappointed vanity; a disease which taints and vitiates the whole character wherever it prevails. It forms the heart to such profound indifference to the welfare of others, that whatever appearances he may assume, or however wide the circle of his seeming virtues may extend, you will infallibly find the vain man his own centre. Attentive only to himself, absorbed in the contemplation of his own perfections, instead of feeling tenderness for his fellow-creatures, as members of the same family, as beings with whom he is appointed to act, to suffer, and to sympathize, he considers life as a stage on which he is performing a part, and mankind in no other light than spectators. Whether he smiles or frowns, whether his path is adorned with the rays of beneficence or his steps are dyed with blood, an attention to self is the spring of every movement, and the motive to which every action is referred.

*Example* 8.—Exposure of moral virtue as a plea for the divine acceptance without a Mediator, upon the Socinian or pharisaical claims. Dr. Chalmers, on Job ix. 33: "Neither is there any day's-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both."

In fact, by putting the Mediator away from you,—by reckoning on a state of safety and acceptance without him, what is the ground upon which, in reference to God, you actually put yourselves? We speak not at present of the danger of persisting in such an attitude of independence,

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—of its being one of those refuges of treachery in which the good man of the world is often to be found,—of its being a state wherein peace lulls him by its flatteries into deceitful repose. We are not at present saying how ruinous it is to rest a security upon an imposing exterior, when in fact the heart is not right in the sight of God, and while the reproving eye of him who judgeth not as man judgeth, is upon him; or how poisonous is the unction that comes upon the soul from those praises which, upon the mere exhibition of the social virtues, are rung and circulated through society. But in addition to the danger, let us insist upon the guilt of thus casting the offered Mediator away from us. It implies, in the most direct way possible, a sentiment of the sufficiency of our own righteousness. It is expressly saying of our obedience, that it is good enough for God. It is presumptuously thinking that what pleases the world may please the Maker of it, even though he himself has declared it to be a world lying in wickedness. There is an aggravation you will perceive in all this which goes beyond the simple infraction of the commandment; it is, after the infraction of it, challenging, for some remainder, or for some semblance of conformity, the reward and approbation of the God whose law we have dishonoured; it is, after we have braved the attribute of the Almighty's justice by incurring its condemnation, making an attempt upon the attribute itself, by bringing it down to the standard of a polluted obedience; it is, after insulting the throne of God's righteousness, embarking in the still deadlier enterprise of demolishing all the stabilities which guard it, and spoiling it of that truth which has pronounced a curse on the children of iniquity,—of that holiness which cannot dwell with evil,—of that unchangeableness which will admit of no compromise with sinners that can violate the honours of the Godhead, or weaken the authority of his government over the universe that he has formed; it is laying those paltry accomplishments which



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gave you a place of distinction among your fellows, before the God of whose throne justice and judgment are the habitation, and calling upon him to connive at all that you want, and to look with complacency on all that you possess; it is to bring to the bar of judgment the poor and imperfect samples of virtue which are current enough in a world broken loose from its communion with God, and to defy the inspection upon them of God's eternal Son, and of the angels he brings along with him to witness the righteousness of his decision. Sin, indeed, has been the ruin of our nature; but this refusal of the Saviour of sinners sinks them into a perdition still deeper and more irrecoverable. It is blindness added to the enormity of sin. It is equivalent to formally announced sentiments on your part, that your performances, sinful as they are, and polluted as they are, are good enough for heaven. It is just saying of the offered Saviour that you do not see the use of him. It is a provoking contempt of mercy, and causing the measure of ordinary guilt to overflow, by heaping the additional blasphemy upon it of calling upon God to honour it by his rewards, and to look to it with complacency of his approbation.

We cannot, then, we cannot draw near to God by a direct or independent approach to him. And who in these circumstances is fit to be the day's-man betwixt you? There is not a fellow-mortal, from Adam downward, who has not sins of his own to answer for. There is not one of them who has not the sentence of guilt inscribed upon his forehead, and who is not arrested by the same unsealed barrier which keeps you at an inaccessible distance from God. There is not one of them whose entrance into the holiest of all would not inflict on it as great a profanation as if any of you were to present yourselves before him who dwelleth there without a Mediator. There lies a great gulf between God and the whole of this alienated world; and after looking round amongst all the fallen ge-

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nerations, we may say, in the language of the text, that "there is not a day's-man betwixt us, who can lay his hand upon us both."—The author then beautifully unfolds the Mediator, Christ Jesus, as the only Saviour.

We cannot fail to see how admirably this author, in the true spirit of critical comment, turns his idea about on every side, still exhibiting variety, some new points of view not exactly taken before; how closely he keeps his point till he convicts the self-righteous moralist,—till he strips him of every subterfuge,—till he exposes his every folly, and secures his sentence of condemnation. Now, though nothing short of divine power can ever reverse the fond imagination of such a subject of wretched infatuation, yet the means are to be used by a preacher of the gospel, and happy is he that can imitate this incomparable author.

*Example* 9.—Payson, on Daniel v. 27. Belshazzar's impious feast.

We too have often consumed God's bounty upon our lusts; we have perverted those faculties which ought to have been consecrated to his service; we have loved and served and idolized the world; and the God in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways, we have not glorified; and though the displeasure of offended heaven is not now suddenly and openly displayed, as it was in the days of Daniel; though no hand is now sent to write the sentence of condemnation on the walls of our houses; yet there is still an invisible witness which continually records our actions; there is still a just and omniscient God by whom these actions are weighed; it is still true that we shall receive of him a just recompence of reward according to our works. Our days are already numbered, and will soon be finished; for God has set bounds to our lives which we cannot pass. Soon shall we be weighed in the balance of eternal truth and justice; and if we are found wanting we shall be cut in sunder, and have our portion appointed us with hypocrites and unbe-

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lievers. And say, are you all prepared to pass this solemn test? Should the same hand that wrote the doom of impious Belshazzar on the plaster of the wall of his palace, be now commissioned to write our names on the plaster of the walls of this house, are there none here present whose thoughts would trouble them?—none whose countenances would change by conscious guilt?—none against whose names the damning sentence, Pekel, would be inscribed?

*Example* 10.—Bradley, on Mark xvi. 7. Christ's message to Peter.

To whom was this message particularly sent? To Peter. And who was Peter that he should be thus singled out from among the disciples? By what was he distinguished from the other ten that he should be thus honoured? We know that at the period when he received this message, he was distinguished by a pre-eminence, not in merit, but in guilt. But two days before he had denied his master, when his master was about to die for him. "All his disciples forsook him and fled," but Peter went further, and added the guilt of falsehood and curses to the baseness of desertion. His sin was of the first magnitude, of a crimson dye. It had, too, this peculiar aggravation, that it brought a scandal on the church when the church seemed least able to bear it. The Shepherd was smitten, the sheep were scattered; and this was the season in which Peter dishonoured his Lord, and denied his connexion with his persecuted followers.

This then was the man to whom the risen Saviour especially directed his angel to send this joyful message. Had the faithful John, who adhered to him in his sufferings and stood by his cross, been thus singled out, it might have excited no surprise; but for Peter, the treacherous Peter, to be thus honoured, seems indeed mysterious. Who can fathom the depth of the Saviour's love? Who can measure his unbounded grace—even this grace which pro-

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duced a suitable repentance, and filled him with such grief as required an extraordinary succour?

*Example* 11.—Jay's Morning Exercises, vol. i., p. 157. Matt. xxvi. 58: "Peter followed afar off," and ultimately denied Christ. This leads to the comment, the force of which is heightened by a consideration of the privileges which Peter had enjoyed, and by comparison, &c. "Peter followed afar off."

This was very unbelieving in him. He had seen his Lord's miracles, and knew what he could do. He knew that he had actually stipulated for their release in the garden, as the condition of his own surrender. He knew that he had assured them that after he was risen from the dead he would appear to them, and employ them as his witnesses, which involved their preservation. What a difference between Peter and Paul!—Paul, who said, "None of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy;" and between Peter and Luther!—Luther, who, when informed of his dangers, said, "If there were as many devils in Worms as there are tiles upon the houses, I would go."—But "Peter followed him afar off."

This was very ungrateful. The Saviour had done much for him. He had healed, by a miracle, his wife's mother. He had called him to the apostleship, the highest honour on earth. He had singularly distinguished him, with James and John, on several occasions. He had saved him by his grace, and enlightened him from above, and was now going to suffer and die for him.—A friend is born for adversity.—Then, instead of keeping at a distance from us, we look for attendance and sympathy. Peter could have unequivocally testified in favour of suffering innocence, but he hangs off! And Patience itself complains, "I looked for some to take pity, and there was none; and for comforters, but I found none!"

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All this, too, was in violation of his own profession and vows; that he was willing to follow him to prison and to death; that he would die with him rather than deny him; and all this had scarcely left his lips, and was uttered just after our Saviour had so solemnly forewarned him. Yet "Peter followed him afar off."

This led to something worse; and I wonder not at the sequel. His after-conduct in denying him thrice, and swearing with oaths and curses, was only the continuance and the increase of his present reluctance.

*Example* 12.—Walker, vol. i., p. 38, 39.

A holy and upright minister of Christ never fails to possess a secret dominion in the hearts of those who are of the most opposite character. Hate him they may, and probably will, but at the same time they are constrained to reverence and esteem him; even "Herod feared John and observed him, and did many things," because he knew that he was a just and holy man.

Whereas on the other hand, when they see those who are clothed with the sacred character paying no regard at all to propriety of conduct, but mixing with the world, and living at large, as other men do;—when they see them grasping at power or scrambling for riches, spreading their sails to every wind, and ready to embark in any cause that can recommend them to those who are able to gratify their ambition or covetousness;—however they may avail themselves of their treason, yet surely they must despise such traitors in their hearts, and look upon them as the dregs and refuse of human kind.

But alas, strange as it may seem, it seldom happens that these perfidious men become so thoroughly contemptible as to be altogether harmless. Even they who despise most, by a perverse and fatal subtlety make their example an occasion of hardening their own souls, fetching arguments from thence to extenuate their guilt, and to cherish

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their presumptuous hopes of impunity; for it has often been observed that no twig is so slender that a wicked man will not cling to it when he feels himself sinking under the rebukes of conscience, and the overwhelming fears of an approaching vengeance.

*Example* 13. Bishop Sherlock, on bad passions.

Hence it is evident in what manner sensual lusts do war against the soul (1 Peter ii. 11), considered as the seat of reason and all the nobler faculties, in the due use and improvement of which the dignity of man consists. If we look into the ages past, or into the present, we shall want no instances of the pernicious effects of passion, assisted by a corrupt and depraved reason. The miseries which men bring upon themselves and others are derived from this fountain; and these miseries, which we provide for ourselves and others, will be found upon a fair computation to make nine parts out of ten of all the evil which the world feels and complains of. "From whence come wars and fightings among you?" says James, "come they not hence, even of your lusts, which war in your members?" He might have added to his catalogue many iniquities more, and repeated the same questions and answers. From whence proceed jealousies, suspicion, the violation of friendship, the discord and ruin of private families? Whence come murders, violence, and oppression? Are these the works of reason given us by God? No: they are the works of sensuality, and of reason made the slave of sensuality. Were all who are given to such works as these to be deprived of their reason, the world about them would be much happier, themselves more harmless, and, I think, not less honourable. So effectually do sinful lusts war against the soul, that it would be better for the world, and not worse for the sensualist, if he had no soul at all.

Scripture examples of Comment of Exposure:—Job iv. 8—21; v. 1—14; xii. 17—25; xxi. 7—34.

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*Reprehensive.*

*Example* 14.—Walker, vol. i., p. 154, on Isa. liii. 3. Despising Christ.

Consider then, that to *despise* Christ and *reject* the Saviour is the blackest ingratitude that can be imagined. .... To render evil for good, hatred for love, is accounted monstrous among men; and the person who behaves in such a manner towards his fellow-creatures is justly condemned and abhorred by all: yet the most heinous and detestable instance of ingratitude among men is as nothing when compared with your ingratitude towards God. Did he, without any solicitation from you, and not only without but even contrary to your deserts, send his own Son into the world to save you? Did the Lord Jesus Christ, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," assume your nature; become a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; lead a poor, afflicted, persecuted life; and at last die a shameful, painful, and accursed death, to satisfy offended justice, and to render your happiness consistent with the honour of the divine government? And is this your requital?

I beseech you, my brethren, to bestow some attention to this; and if your hearts have any softness at all, such unparalleled baseness cannot fail to make the deepest impression upon them. Does this astonishing, undeserved goodness merit no regard? Does God's unspeakable gift to man deserve no return of gratitude and praise? Shall the blood of Christ be shed in vain; nay, trampled under your feet as an unholy thing? Will you crucify the Son of God afresh, and say, by your neglect of his great salvation, "Away with him! away with him!" "We have loved strangers, and after them we will go?" Surely you cannot, you will not, pretend to justify such conduct; there is something in it so disingenuous and perverse, so shocking and unnatural, that I am persuaded when you

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attend to it, you must loathe and abhor yourselves on account of it.

But this is not the whole of your guilt; your ingratitude is heightened by the most insolent contempt both of the wisdom and goodness of God. You charge God with folly when you reject the terms of the gospel covenant; for your behaviour plainly implies one of the following accusations: either that this method of salvation is unnecessary, and that God from all eternity has employed his counsels about a needless affair; or else that it is ineffectual, and that the person whom God has chosen to execute his designs is not worthy to be depended upon; or that the terms proposed are so rigorous and severe that a wise man would rather choose to perish than submit to them. Thus dost thou arraign thy God, O sinner? Dost thou hope to prevail in the day when God should plead with thee?

Nay, further, by despising and rejecting Christ, you openly proclaim war against the Most High, and bid him defiance. "He has set his king upon his holy hill of Zion, and put all things under his feet;" he has ordained by an irreversible decree that "all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father." He has published to the world that there is no other name given among men by which they can be saved, than the name of Jesus; that this glorious Mediator is constituted the final judge of mankind; and that they who do not bow to the sceptre of his grace should be dashed to pieces with his rod of iron in that day when he shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance upon those who know not God, and obey not this gospel which we now preach to you;—and yet, in the face of all these declarations, you proudly say by your conduct, "We will not have this man to reign over us;" we neither fear his power nor court his grace, but are determined to stand on our own defence.

Such, my brethren, is the malignity of your sin: it includes the blackest ingratitude, heightened by the most

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malignant contempt; nay, an open defiance of the omnipotent God; rejecting his offered mercy, and daring him to execute all the rigours of his justice. I do not mean that you are at present conscious of this complicated impiety; I rather suppose that you are startled when you hear it mentioned, and are ready to reply, as Hazael did to Elisha, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do these things?" But be assured all I have now said shall be made good against you at last, if you continue to despise and reject the Saviour; and the greatest mercy that can befall you in the mean time is, to get those eyes opened which Satan has so long closed, that you may see and abhor your guilt in this matter. Oh, be exhorted then, deliberately to weigh the representation I have given you, if you go out of this world with such a dreadful load of guilt as I have described!

Here is a specimen of the way of men—of God dealing with sinners. Mr. W. attacks the strongholds of nature's depravity; and if such powerful comment take not effect, sad indeed must be the state into which a man falls when he is thus past feeling. Mr. Walker, in the concluding part of his discourse, assumes the most inviting forms of address; endeavours to touch the heart, and incite to feelings of the most winning character; but these, not being in the manner of comment, I leave.

Scripture examples of Reprehensive Comment:—Job xxii. 4—10; xxiv. 3—25. Ps. lxxviii.

### AMPLIFICATORY.

*Example* 1.—Jay, in his Morning Exercises, vol. i. p. 277, on John xiv. 18, speaking of the happiness to be derived from Christ, descants in a way of amplification upon the characters which the Saviour sustains, &c.

The happiness we derive from creatures is like a beggar's garment—it is made up of pieces and patches, and is

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worth very little after all. But the blessedness we derive from the Saviour is single and complete. In him all fulness dwells. He is coeval with every period. He is answerable to every condition. He is a physician, to heal; a counsellor, to plead; a king, to govern; a friend, to sympathize; a father, to provide. He is a foundation, to sustain; a root, to enliven; a fountain, to refresh. He is the shadow from the heat; the bread of life; the morning star; the sun of righteousness,—*all, and in all.* [This is the climax.] No creature can be a substitute for him; but he can supply the place of every creature. He is all my salvation and all my desire; my hope, my peace, my life, my glory, and joy. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." I cannot be exposed, I cannot be friendless, I cannot be poor, I cannot be fearful, I cannot be sorrowful—with thee.

*Example* 2.—The same author shows, in a very forcible manner, the iniquity and folly of ungodly men, by judiciously commenting, in a way of amplification, on the character and perfections of God. The text is Mal. iii. 8: "Will a man rob God?"

Is it probable? Is it possible? Can he be so *disingenuous?* What! rob a father, a friend, a benefactor! The best of all fathers! The kindest of all friends! The most generous of all benefactors! Can he be so *daring?*—to rob a Being so high and sacred; and whose glory so enhances the offence! Can he be so *irrational?*—to rob a Being—not absent, for he never is absent; but in his presence—not in the night, but in the day; and darkness and light are both alike to him—not when he sees not, observes not, but while he is looking on, and *must* look on; for his eyes are upon all the ways of man, and he pondereth all his goings? Can he be so *desperate?*—To rob one who can, who will, punish; and whose punishment is

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not only unavoidable but intolerable? It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Yet, says God—and he cannot be mistaken, or accuse unrighteously —"Ye have robbed *me*."

*Example* 3.—R. Walker,—on 1 Thess. iii. 8: "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord,"—takes occasion to comment on the character and spirit of the apostle. He observes,—

The general meaning of the passage is obvious: it contains an obliging and spirited declaration of the apostle's good will to the Christians at Thessalonica. Let it be remembered that Paul, at the time of writing this epistle, was a poor, afflicted, solitary man; banished from his friends, living among strangers, labouring with his own hands for a scanty subsistence, and destitute of almost every earthly comfort. All this the Thessalonians knew full well. Judge, then, with what emotion they would read this strong, this endearing profession of his concern for their welfare; *they* who, under God, owed their conversion to his ministry, and to whom his past sufferings on their own account, and his present distress, were perfectly known. He had told them a little before, that the bitterest ingredient in all his afflictions was the apprehension he had that his sufferings might have a tendency to shake their faith, and to prejudice their minds against the gospel of Christ: ver. 5—7. And then he adds, "For *now*," even at this present time, distressed and afflicted as we are, yet "now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord."

Here then the purest zeal for the honour of his Master, and the most generous love to the souls of men, are happily united, and feelingly expressed in the native language of a warm and upright heart. I say, the *purest* zeal and the most *generous* love; for no tincture of selfishness appears in either. If Christ is glorified,—if men are saved,—Paul obtains his utmost wish; his happiness is independent of every thing else; he enjoys all that in his own estimation

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is worthy to be accounted life, if his spiritual childern stand fast in the Lord. And is not this a temper of most distinguished excellence? When I called it *amiable*, I only spoke the half of its praise: it has a *dignity*, as well as a beauty, belonging to it, superior to any thing that is commonly celebrated by that name among men. Would we behold *heroism* in its fairest and most exalted form, instead of looking for it among those whom the world has styled *heroes*, we shall succeed far better if we turn our eyes to Saul of Tarsus. Where shall we find such determined courage, such cool intrepidity, and contempt of danger, as in this good and faithful soldier of Christ. "Behold," said he, to the elders of the church at Ephesus, "Behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem," &c.: Acts xx. 22. With what invincible fortitude did he triumph over adversity in every frightful shape! With what noble freedom and independence of spirit did he exult amidst those sufferings of which human nature hath the greatest abhorrence! "Even unto this hour," says he, in his letters to the Corinthians, "we both hunger and thirst, and are buffeted; and have no certain dwelling-place: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed," &c. And what can attract our love, what can merit our esteem, what can excite our admiration, if such a temper doth not? A temper which, to all the magnanimity of the hero, unites all the piety and benevolence of the saint. But it will not avail us barely to esteem or admire this temper: it is necessary, my brethren, that we ourselves be possessed of it. . . . . .

ADMONITORY.

*Example* 1.—A comment of caution to ministers, on 1 Cor. iv. 30; also suited to 1 Cor. ix. 27, Dr. Chalmers's text.

A preacher may have his mind familiarized to every

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article of faith,—to demonstrate the channel of influence by which it is brought down from heaven upon the hearts of believers,—to cast an eye of intelligence on the whole system of Christian doctrine,—to lay bare those ligaments of connexion by which a true faith in the mind is ever sure to bring a new spirit and a new practice along with it,—and to hold up the light both of Scripture and experience over the whole process of man's regeneration. It is possible for him to do all this, and yet have no part in that regeneration,—to declare with ability and effect the gospel to others, and yet himself be a castaway,—to unravel the whole of that spiritual mechanism by which a sinner is transformed into a saint, while he does not exemplify that mechanism upon his own person,—to explain what must be done and what must be undergone in the process of becoming one of the children of the kingdom, while he himself remains one of the children of the world. To him the kingdom of God has come in word, and it hath come in the letter, and it hath come in natural discernment; but it hath not come in power. He may have profoundly studied the whole doctrine of the kingdom, and have conceived the various ideas of which it is composed, and have embodied them in word, and have poured them forth in utterance, and yet be as little spiritualized by these manifold operations, as the air is spiritualized by its being the avenue of the sound of his voice to the ears of his listening auditory. The living man may, with all the force of his native intelligence, be a mere vehicle of transmission. The Holy Ghost may leave the message to take its own way through his mind; and may refuse the accession of his influence, till it makes its escape from the lips of the preacher; and may trust for its conveyance to those aërial undulations by which the report is carried forward to an assembled mul-

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titude; and may only, after the entrance of hearing has been effected for the terms of the message,—may only, after the unaided powers of moral and physical nature have brought the matter thus far,—may then, and not till then, add his own influence to the truths of the message, and send them with this impregnation from the ear to the conscience of any whom he listeth. And thus, from the workings of a cold and desolate bosom in the human expounder, may there proceed a voice which, in its way to some of those who are assembled around him, shall turn out to be a voice of urgency and power. He may be the instrument of blessings to others, which have never come with kindly and effective influence upon his own heart. He may inspire an energy which he does not feel, and pour a comfort into the wounded spirit, the taste of which and the enjoyment of which is not permitted to his own. And nothing can serve more effectually than this experimental fact to humble him, and to demonstrate the existence of a power which cannot be wielded by all the energies of nature,—a power often refused to eloquence, often refused to the might and glory of human wisdom,—often refused to the most strenuous exertions of human might and human talent, and generally met with in richest abundance among the ministrations of the men of simplicity and prayer.

### ARGUMENTATIVE.

*Example* 1.—Jay, on Acts iii. 9, 10. The reality of this miracle is shown by brief but forcible arguments, and the effect is greatly enhanced by the several comments that are interspersed.

The cripple's walking was a proof of the reality and perfection of the cure. His praising God was the proper improvement of it. What an attestation was here to the divine mission of the apostles, and so to the truth of

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Christianity itself! There was nothing like artifice or collusion in this miracle. The patient resided not in a remote place, but in Jerusalem, that is, in the midst of their enemies. He had been lame from his mother's womb, and was now upwards of forty years old. He was well known; he was a beggar. Multitudes had seen him; many had relieved him; and many had handled him, for he was carried daily to the place of begging. And this was not an obscure corner, but the entrance into the temple. And the thing was not done in the night; but at nine o'clock in the morning, when there was a concourse of people. Put all this together; and then ask whether any thing could have been fairer. Could any thing have been more open to detection had there been any imposture? Compare such an achievement with the prodigies of heathenism, and the miracles of the Romish church. What then shall we think of the *credulity* of unbelievers? What is the faith of a Christian to their belief? Christians believe difficulties, because they are abundantly confirmed; but *they* swallow improbabilities and impossibilities. Their rejection of the gospel cannot arise from an intellectual but a moral cause. They do not want evidence, but disposition; they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved.

*Example* 2.—R. Walker furnishes a specimen of familiar argument, united with strong comment and solemn appeal, vol. i., lect. iii., on Ps. xix. 13: "Presumptuous sins."

It is in vain to say, O sinner, that the sins of profane swearing, perjury, theft, uncleanness, and drunkenness, are not presumptuous sins. It is in vain for you to plead that you do not directly intend thus much; I verily believe you think so; for, proud and stubborn as you are, I am confident that you dare not utter such blasphemies before God, nor even avow them to your own heart. But does it

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follow thence that you are not chargeable with them? The fallacy of this reasoning can easily be detected. Tell me, do you intend your own damnation? I need not wait for an answer; I am sure you do not. Pray, then, what meaning have you at all? You wilfully transgress the laws of God, but you do not intend to be punished for it: on the contrary, you shudder at the prospect of suffering, and would certainly oppose it with all your might. This is one side. On the other hand, you say that you have no direct intention to injure or insult the majesty of God; you mean no prejudice to his authority, nor to any of his perfections, his wisdom, holiness, justice, or almighty power. Can any body reconcile these two opposites? You are unwilling to be miserable; and yet you are willing that God should possess those tremendous attributes by the exercise of which you must be made miserable! This is a flat contradiction. The case is plain, whether you perceive it or not: you would certainly dethrone God if you could; you would reverse his laws or disarm his power that you might follow your inclinations without fear or control. And this is the disposition of every presumptuous sinner, though perhaps his heart may be so hard and unfeeling as not to perceive it.

### CONTEMPLATIVE.

Howe, on Matt. xvi. 24. Delight in God.

How great is the pleasure arising from self-denial! How pleasant when we have learned to forsake and abandon ourselves; when the idol self is no longer maintained within us, at the dear expense of our peace, comfort, safety, and eternal hope; an idol that engrosses the whole substance of our souls, that exhausts and devours that strength and vigour of our spirits which it does not maintain and cannot repair, which consumes our time, which keeps all our powers and faculties in a continual



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exercise and hurry, to make a costly, a vain, and an unlawful provision for it! How great is the ease and pleasure which we feel on being delivered from that soul-wasting monster that was fed and sustained at a dearer rate, and with more costly sacrifices and repasts, than can be paralleled by either sacred or other history; that has made more desolations in the souls of men than ever was made in their towns and cities, where idols were served with only human sacrifices or monstrous creatures, satiated only with such refections; or where the lives and safety of the most were to be bought out of the constant and successive tribute of the blood of not a few! that hath devoured more and preyed more cruelly upon human lives than Moloch or the Minotaur. When this monstrous idol is destroyed and broken down, what jubilee does it make, what songs of triumph and praise doth it furnish and supply to the poor soul now delivered and redeemed from death and bondage! How much more easy and reasonable a service is it, when once the grace of God and these dear experiences give men to understand it, to study to please God than themselves; when they feel themselves dead to their former lord's service, and only to live to God through Jesus Christ; when sin no longer reigns in their mortal bodies, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof! Rom. vi. 11, 12, 18. What an ease is it to the spirit of a man when he has not himself to seek and serve in any unlawful, disallowed sense; when he finds himself not necessitated or urged by his own imperious fleshly inclinations so to do; when he perceives himself counterpoised by a preventing better principle, and the weight and bias of his own spirit inclines him quite another way; when he finds that he has nothing left him to do but to serve God, to know his will, and to do it; and when he is disemburdened of all unnecessary care for himself, that which is necessary being a part of his duty, and therefore done on purpose only for God! What life is

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pleasant if this be not! Surely wherein it is attained to it is most pleasant, and hither this gracious, heart-rectifying communication is greatly tending.

Scripture examples of Contemplative Comment:—Job iii. 17—26; vii. 1—10; xiv. 1—3; xix. 25—27; xxix.; Ps. xc.; and the Book of Ecclesiastes.

### HYPERBOLICAL.

Payson, on Job xxii. 5. Sinners will not be saved.

Reason with them,—they will not be convinced; set motives before them,—they will not be persuaded; address their hearts,—they will not be affected; appeal to their consciences,—they will not feel guilty; attempt to excite their fears,—they will not be alarmed; endeavour to allure them to Christ by promises and invitations,—they will not come; beseech them; weep over them; expostulate with them in the most affectionate and pathetic manner; set good and evil, life and death, heaven and hell, judgment and eternity, before them in every form:—they make light of all, and go their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise. In vain have prophets prophesied; in vain have apostles preached; in vain have angels descended from heaven; in vain has the Son of God appeared on earth and spoken as man never spake; in vain has the eternal Father proclaimed from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, hear him;"—still sinners will not hear; they will not come to Christ for life; they will neglect the great salvation. Sin is committed against an infinite Being,—against God; a Being infinitely powerful, just, and good. The criminality of an offence is in proportion to the excellence and greatness of the person against whom it is committed. For instance, it is wrong for a child to strike a brother. Should the same child strike his father, it would be incomparably more so. Were his father a king, possessed of every good quality, the act would be



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still more criminal. But God is our heavenly Father, the universal King, infinitely exalted above every human parent—above every earthly monarch; possessed in an infinite degree of every perfection which can entitle him to the perfect love, confidence, and obedience of his creatures. He is also the author and preserver of the very powers and faculties which we employ in sinning against him, and he has conferred upon us innumerable favours. Of course we are under infinite obligation to love and obey him; and therefore to violate these obligations, and to sin against such a Being, must be an infinite evil.

INTERROGATIVE.

Davies, on Rev. iii. 15, 16.

Is lukewarmness a proper temper towards Jesus Christ? Is this a suitable return for that love that brought him down from his native paradise into our wretched world?—that love which kept his mind, for thirty-three painful years, intent upon this one object, the salvation of sinners?—that love that rendered him cheerfully patient of the shame, the curse, and the torture of crucifixion, and all the agonies of the most painful death?—that love which makes him still the sinner's friend in the court of heaven, where he appears as our prevailing advocate and intercessor? Blessed Jesus! is lukewarmness a proper return to thee for all this kindness? No; methinks devils could not treat thee worse. My fellow-mortals, my fellow-sinners, who are the objects of all this love, can you put him off with languid devotion and faint services? Then every grateful and generous passion is extinct in your souls, and you are qualified to venture upon every form of ingratitude and baseness.

. . . . . .

As lukewarmness is not a suitable feeling towards Christ, so neither is it suitable to a view of eternal happiness and misery. Is it a suitable temper with regard to happiness far exceeding the utmost bounds of our present thoughts,

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equal to the largest capacities of our souls in the most improved and perfect state?—an happiness beyond the grave, when all the enjoyments of this transitory life have taken an eternal flight from us, and leave us hungry and famishing for ever if these be our only portion;—an happiness that will last as long as our immortal spirits, and never fade or fly from us! Or are our lukewarmness and indifference a suitable temper with respect to misery beyond expression, beyond conception dreadful?—misery inflicted by a God of almighty power and inexorable justice upon a number of obstinate, incorrigible rebels, for numberless wilful and daring provocations, inflicted on purpose to show his wrath and make his power known;—misery proceeding from the united fury of divine indignation, of turbulent passions, of a guilty conscience, of malicious, tormenting devils;—misery (who can bear up under the horror of the thought?) that should last as long as the eternal God should live to inflict it; as long as sin should continue evil to deserve it; without mitigation, never, never to see an end! And remember that a state of happiness or misery is not remote from us, but near us, just before us; the next year, the next hour, or the next moment we may enter into it, as an estate for which we are now candidates, now upon our trial;—our eternal all is now at stake. O sirs, does an inactive, careless posture become us in such a situation? Can this be a matter of indifference to us? Can you be lukewarm about such matters? . . . . .

### CONTRAST.

*Example* 1.—Chalmers, on Astronomy. Infidels contrasted with angels.

The infidel, then, as he widens the field of his contemplations (through immensities and worlds), would suffer its every object to die away in forgetfulness. The angels,

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expatiating as they do over the range of a loftier universality, are represented as all awake to the history of each of its distinct and subordinate provinces. The infidel, with his mind afloat among suns and among systems, can find no place in his already occupied mind for the humble world, which lodges and accommodates our species. The angels, standing upon a loftier summit, and with a mightier prospect of creation before them, are yet represented as looking down on this single world, and attentively marking every feeling and every demand of all its families. The infidel, by sinking us down to an unnoticeable minuteness, would lose sight of our dwelling-place altogether, and spread a darkening shroud of oblivion over all the concerns and over all the interests of men: but the angels will not so abandon us; undazzled by the whole surpassing grandeur of that scenery which is around them, they are revealed as directing all the fulness of their regard to this our habitation, and casting a longing and benignant eye on ourselves and on our children.

The infidel will tell us of those worlds which roll afar, and the number of which outstrips the arithmetic of the human understanding; and then, with the hardness of an unfeeling calculator, will consign the one we occupy, with all its guilty generations, to despair. But He who counts the number of the stars is set forth to us as looking at every inhabitant among the millions of our species, and by the word of the gospel beckoning to him with the hand of invitation, and on the very first step of his return is moving towards him, with all the eagerness of the prodigal's father, to receive him back again into that presence from which he had wandered. And as to this world, in favour of which the scowling infidel will not permit one solitary movement, all heaven is represented as in a stir about its restoration; and there cannot a single son or a single daughter be recalled from sin into righteousness, without

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an acclamation of joy among the hosts of paradise. Aye, and I can say it of the humblest and the unworthiest of you all, that the eye of angels is upon him, and that his repentance would at this moment send forth a wave of delightful sensibility through the mighty throng of their innumerable legions.

*Example* 2.—Contrast of false and real Religion.—Blair, in his Lectures on Rhetoric, cites a fine passage of this kind from Bishop Sherlock. Natural religion is personified as being in a state of hesitation, whether to adopt the Koran or the Gospel. The preacher then addresses her in these words:

"Go to Mahomet and his disciples, arrayed in blood, riding in triumph over the spoils of thousands and tens of thousands, who fell by his victorious sword. See the cities which he set in flames, the countries which he ravaged and destroyed; and the miserable distress of all the inhabitants of those countries, which were left to see wretchedness in its most gloomy forms. When you have viewed him in this scene, go into his retirements; see the prophet's chamber, his concubines and wives; see his adultery, and hear him allege revelation and his divine commission to justify his lust and oppression. If you are weary of this disgusting prospect, turn to the blessed Jesus, humble and meek, doing good to all the sons of men, patiently instructing both the ignorant and the perverse; see him in his most retired privacies; follow him to the mount, and hear his devotions and supplications to God; go to his table, and view his poor fare; hear his heavenly discourse; see him injured, but not provoked; attend him to the tribunal, and consider the patience with which he endured the cross; view him in the agony of death; hear his last prayer for his persecutors, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Here, then, stand still, and judge which is the true prophet of God. Let the centurion speak your language, *Truly this man was the Son of God!*"

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EXPOSITORY.

*Example* 1.—Horsley, on John xiii. 34. The "new commandment."

It was, indeed, in various senses a *new commandment*. First, as the thing enjoined was a great novelty in the practice of mankind. The age in which our Saviour lived on earth was an age of pleasure and dissipation; sensual appetite, indulged to a most unwarrantable excess, had extinguished all the nobler feelings. This is ever the effect when it is suffered to get the ascendant, and it is for this reason that it is said by the apostle to war against the soul. The refinements of luxury, spread among all ranks of men, had multiplied their artificial wants beyond the proportion of the largest fortunes; and thus, bringing all men into the class of the necessitous, had universally induced the churlish habit of the mind in which every feeling is considered as a weakness which terminates not in self; and those generous sympathies by which every one is impelled to seek his neighbour's good are industriously suppressed, as disturbers of the repose of the individual, and enemies to his personal enjoyments. This is the tendency, and hath ever been the effect, of luxury, in every nation where it has unhappily taken root. It renders every man selfish upon principle. The first symptom of this fatal corruption is the extinction of generous public spirit, that is, of real regard to the interest and good order of society; in the place of which arises the base and odious counterfeit which, assuming the name of patriotism, thinks to cover the infamy of every vice which can disgrace the private life of man, by clamours for the public good; of which the real object all the while is nothing more than the gratification and rapacity of demagogues. The next stage of the corruption is a perfect indifference and insensibility, in all ranks of men, to every thing but the gratification of the moment. An idle peasantry subsist themselves by theft

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and violence, and a voluptuous nobility squander, on base and criminal indulgences, that superfluity of store which should go to the defence of the country in times of public danger, or to the relief of private distress. In an age therefore of luxury, such as that was in which our Saviour lived on earth, genuine philanthropy being necessarily extinguished, the religious love of our neighbour, which is far beyond ordinary philanthropy, will rarely, if ever, be found.

*Example* 2.—Horsley, on Mark vii. 37. We read in St. Luke that our "Lord was casting out a devil, and it was dumb; and it came to pass that, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake, and the populace that were witnesses of the miracle, wondered."

*They wondered,* and there was an end of their speculations upon the business: they made no further inquiry; their thoughts led them to no further conclusion than that the thing was very strange. These seem to be a people of the stupid sort that abounds too much in all ranks of society, whose notice is attracted by things that come to pass, not according to the difficulty of accounting for them, —a thing that never breaks their slumbers, but according as they are more or less frequent. They are neither excited by any scientific curiosity to inquire after the established causes of the most common things, nor by any pious regard to God's providential government of the world to inquire after him in the most uncommon. Day and night succeed each other in constant vicissitude; the seasons hold their unvaried course; the sun makes his annual journey through the same regions of the sky; the moon runs the circle of her monthly changes, with a motion ever varying, yet subject to one constant law and limit of its variations; the tides of the ocean ebb and flow; heavy waters are supported at a great height in the thinner fluid of the air,—they are collected in clouds which overspread the summer sky, and descend in showers to refresh the verdure of the earth,—or they are driven by strong gales



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to the bleak regions of the north, whence the wintry winds return them to these milder climates, to fall lightly upon the tender blade in flakes of snow, and form a mantle to shelter the hope of the husbandman from the nipping frost. These things are hardly noticed by the sort of people who are now before us: they excite not even their wonder, though in themselves most wonderful; much less do they awaken them to inquire by what mechanism of the universe a system so complex with motions and vicissitudes, and yet so regular and orderly in its complications, is carried on. They say to themselves, "These are common occurrences of nature," and they are satisfied. These same sort of people, if they see blind men restored to sight, or the deaf and dumb suddenly endowed with the faculties of hearing and of speech, without the use of physical means, wonder,—*i. e.*, they say to themselves, "It is uncommon," and they concern themselves no further. These few discover God neither in the still voice of nature, nor in the sudden blaze of miracle. They seem hardly to come within the definition of man, which was given by some of the ancient philosophers, that he is an animal which contemplates the objects of its senses,—they contemplate nothing: two sentences,—"It is very uncommon," or "It is very strange," make at once the sum of the detail of their philosophy and of their belief, and are to them a solution of all difficulties. They wonder for a while, but they presently dismiss the subject of their wonder from their thoughts. Wonder, connected with a principle of natural curiosity, is the source of all knowledge and discovery,—and it is a principle even of piety; but wonder that ends in wonder, and is satisfied with wondering, is the quality of an idiot.

We see here the power of comment, it seizes even a single word, tries it upon its principles, especially on qualities, as in Topic 23, vol. ii., examines and condemns, or, on another subject, commends and approves.

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Some may get into a miserable habit of trifling upon words; but when words can, as in this instance, be turned to principles, to a developement of character, a signal honour attends the examination, and nothing can effect this so well as comment.

*Example* 3.—Jay's Exercises, vol. i., p. 198, Rom. x. 12: "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."

He is rich, that is, he is *plenteous*, to all that call upon him. Some, if they are bountiful, are poor in bounty. And this appears, not only in the smallness of their gifts, but in the *mode* of giving. It seems done by constraint; not willingly, and of a ready mind. It does not drop from them as honey from the comb, or flow like water from a spring. It seems an unnatural effort. You feel no more respect when they give much than when they give little; every thing like nobleness is destroyed by the manner: the meanness of the disposition is betrayed; and the poor-spirited mortal can no more give kindly and generously than a clown can dance gracefully. But "the Lord God is a sun; he gives grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold." He is "abundant in goodness and truth." He "abundantly pardons;" and, while he "gives liberally," he "upbraids not."

*Example* 4.—South, on Gen. i. 27. Man formed in the image of God.

Such was his *understanding*, his noblest faculty. It was then sublime, clear, aspiring, and, as it were, the soul's upper region, lofty and serene, free from the vapours and disturbances of the inferior affections. It was the leading, controlling faculty; all the passions wore the colours of reason; it was not consul, but dictator. Discourse was then almost as quick as intuition; it was nimble in proposing, firm in concluding; it could sooner determine than now it can dispute. Like the sun, it had both light and agility; it knew no rest, but in motion; no quiet, but in

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activity: it did not so properly apprehend as irradiate the object; not so much find as make things intelligible: it did arbitrate upon the several reports of sense, and all the varieties of imagination; not, like the drowsy judge, only hearing, but also directing their verdict. In fine, it was vegete, quick, and lively; open as the day, untainted as the morning, full of the innocence and sprightliness of youth: it gave the soul a bright and full view into all things, and was not only a window, but itself a prospect. Briefly, there is as much difference between the clear representation of the understanding then, and the obscure discoveries that it makes now, as there is between the prospect of a casement and of a key-hole.

*Example* 5.—Idem, p. 173.

The teaching part, indeed, of a Romish bishop is easy enough, whose grand business is only to teach men how to be ignorant; to instruct them how to know nothing, or, which is all one, to know upon trust, to believe implicitly; and, in a word, to see with other men's eyes, till they come to be lost in their own souls. But our religion is a religion that dares to be understood, that offers itself to the search of the inquisitive, to the inspection of the severest and the most enlightened reason: for, being secure of her substantial truth and purity, she knows that for her to be seen and looked upon is to be embraced and admired. As there needs no greater argument for men to love the light than to see it, it needs no legends, no service in an unknown tongue, no inquisition against Scripture, no purging out the heart and sense of authors, no altering or bribing the voice of antiquity to speak for it; it needs none of those laborious artifices of ignorance, none of those cloaks of covering. The Romish faith, indeed, must be covered, or it cannot keep warm. And their clergy deal with their religion as with a great crime,—if it is discovered they are undone; but there is no bishop of the Church of England but accounts it his interest

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as well as his duty to comply with this precept of Paul: "These things teach and exhort."

*Example* 6.—Bradley, on Eph. iii. 8. "Less than the least of all saints." We cannot take even the most hasty glance at the writings of the Apostle, without, at the same time, noticing *the entire submission of his mind to the Gospel of Christ*, the simple and hearty reception which he gave to divine truths.

He had naturally the same proud heart that we have, and hated the humiliatory doctrines connected with the cross of Christ as much as we hate them; nay, they were more offensive to him than they can be to us. They were opposed, not only to those common workings of pride which we all feel, but a multitude of prejudices peculiar to himself, and to the age and country in which he lived. He was a Jew; he was a scholar of Gamaliel; he was a man of strong intellectual powers; and yet all the prejudices of the Jew, all the pride of the scholar, and all the dictates of worldly wisdom, were torn out of his heart, and the once proud and haughty Saul is seen sitting at the feet of the carpenter's son, humble and teachable as a little child. Read his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, brethren, and see how low the grace of God can humble the proudest mind. We do not find him endeavouring in these epistles to accommodate the doctrines of the Gospel to his former opinions, altering and qualifying them to make them square with the feelings of the Jew or the pride of the philosopher; he received them all with simplicity and godly sincerity. Every imagination, "every high thing," which had so long "exalted itself in his mind against the knowledge of God," seems to be utterly cast down, and every thought brought into subjection, "into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

*Example* 7.—Dr. Chalmers, on Mark ii. 27. The Sanctity of the Sabbath.

The first recommendation of the sabbath is the place

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which it occupies in the decalogue. There was much of Jewish observancy swept away with the ruin of the national institutions. There was much designed for a temporary purpose, and which fell into disuse among the worshippers of God after that purpose was accomplished. A Christian of the present day looks upon many of the most solemn services of Judaism in no other light than as fragments of a perishable ritual; nor does he ever think that, upon himself, they have any weight of personal obligation; but this does not hold true of all the duties and all the services of Judaism. There is a broad line of distinction between that part of it which is now broken up, and that part of it which still retains all the authority of a perpetual and immutable law. Point out to us a single religious observance of the Hebrews that is now done away, and we are able to say of it and of all others which have experienced a similar termination, that they every one of them live without the compass of the ten commandments. They have no place whatever in that great record of duty which was graven on the tables of stone, and placed within the Holy of Holies under the mercy-seat. Then how does the law of the sabbath stand as to this particular? does it lie within or without a limit so tangible, and forming so distinct and so noticeable a line of demarcation? We see it standing within this record, of which all the other duties are of such general and such imperishable obligations. We meet with it in the interior of that hallowed ground of which every other part is so sacred and so inviolable. We see it occupying its own conspicuous place in that registry of duties, all of which have the substance and the irrevocable permanency of moral principle. On reading over the other articles of this memorable code, we see all of them stamped with such endearing characters of obligation as no time can wear away, and the law of the sabbath taking its station in the midst of them, and enshrined on each side of it among the immutabilities of truth and justice and piety.

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It is true that much of Judaism has now fallen into desuetude, and that many of its dearest and most distinguished solemnities are now regarded in no other light than as the obsolete and repealed observances of an antiquated ritual; but it is worthy of being observed well, that the whole of this work of demolition took place without the line of demarcation; we see no attempt whatever to violate the sanctity of the ground which this line incloses. We no where see any express or recorded incursion upon any one of the observances of the decalogue. We perceive an apostle, in the New Testament, making his allusion to the fifth of those observances, and calling it "the first commandment with promise;" and by the very notice he bestows on the arrangement of the duties, we are given to understand that no attempt had been made to disturb their order, or to depose any one of them from the place which had been assigned to it. We should count it an experiment of the most daring audacity, without the intimation of any act of repeal past in the high legislation of heaven, to fly in the face of that sabbath law which stands enrolled among the items of so notable and so illustrious a document; and nothing short of a formal and absolute recalment can ever tempt us to think that the new dispensation of the gospel has created so much as one vacancy in that register of duties which leave upon the aspect of its whole history the impress of a revealed demand that is unalienable and everlasting. We cannot give up one article in that series of enactments which in every age of the Christian world has been revealed as a code, not of ceremonial, but of moral law. We cannot consent, but on the ground of some resistless and overbearing argument, to the mutilation of the integrity of this venerable record. We see throughout the whole line of Jewish history that it stood separate and alone; and that, free from all the marks of national or local peculiarity, it bore upon it none of the frailty of the other institutions, but has been preserved and handed down to us, an unchanged

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standard of duty for all generations. We see at the very commencement of the Mosaic dispensation how God himself thought fit to signalize it; for from the place where he stood did he proclaim the ten commandments of the law in the hearing of the assembled multitude; while every other enactment, whether moral or ceremonial, was conveyed to the knowledge of the people through the medium of human legislation; and we should feel that, in dethroning any one of the preceptive impositions of the decalogue from its authority over our practice, we were bidding defiance to the declared will of the Eternal, and resisting a voice which sounds as loudly and as impressively to our conscience as the one that issued in thunder from the flaming top of Sinai, and scattered dismay among the thousands of Israel.*

The importance of comment must have been so apparent from the perusal of the foregoing observations and examples, that any additional arguments to enforce a careful attention to its cultivation, are rendered perfectly unnecessary. The apostle Paul, in addressing his beloved son Timothy, says, "Meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them." So would I say to you; and, that your studies may be pleasant to yourselves and profitable to those who sit under your ministry, I have subjoined the following Key, which I have found of essential service to myself, and which doubtless will not be without its use to you.

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## A KEY TO THE STUDENT'S LIBRARY.

The following plan will discover in a few minutes what the library affords upon any given text or subject; and

* See examples of Comment in St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and my sermon on Jer. li. 10. Several examples will also be found in the former part of this work; especially Horsley on Psalm xlv.; Psalm xcvii. 7, and others are of this kind. See Index of Texts.

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thus, with the addition of commentators in possession, concordances, parallelisms, and private memorandums, the preacher's own thoughts will be enriched, and his matter extended. . . . The method here laid down will, if the books be numerous, cost some time and trouble; but it is scarcely possible to conceive the great and many advantages that will reward the labour. In many cases the labour will be small at the first, but will be increased as the library is augmented from time to time. Every book bought should add something to the stock either for texts or subjects. I can only trace the plan to the late Dr. Bogue. This plan requires three books and indexes.

The first of these is a *general registry-book* or *text-book*, wherein all the volumes of sermons, or single sermons, are to be entered. The numbers on the left are the student's private numbers, and by which numbers the several articles are to be transferred into the other two books, for their several uses, thus :

BATES'S SERMONS, Vol. I.

| | | | Pages of books. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Existence of God . . . . | Ps. xc. 2. | 5 |
| 2 | Immortality of the Soul . . | Gen. ii. 7. | 37 |
| 3 | Resignation. "Not my will," &c. | Matt. xxvi. 39. | 263 |
| | TILLOTSON, Vol. I. | | |
| 4 | Sincerity. "Behold an Israelite." | John i. 47. | 1 |
| 5 | Faith of Abm. in offering his Son. | Heb. xi. 17. 19 | 11 |
| 6 | Moses' Choice. "He chose," &c. | Heb. xi. 24. 25 | 21 |
| | BLAIR, Vol. I. | | |
| 7 | Piety and Morality in Cornelius. | Acts x. 4. | 1 |
| 8 | Religion in Adversity . . . | Ps. xxvii. 6. | 25 |
| 9 | ——— Prosperity . . . | Ps. i. 3. | 58 |
| | BOURDALOUE, Vol. I. | | |
| 10 | Birth of Christ . . . . . | Luke ii. 12. | 1 |
| 11 | His Passion . . . . . | Luke xxiii. 28. | 141 |
| 12 | The Trinity . . . . . | Matt. xxviii. 29. | 476 |

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My numbers run to 7,000, besides my own manuscripts, the accumulation of twenty-five years. And besides this stock, Mr. Simeon furnished me with 2,440, which (except skeletons) have such an order in themselves, that no registry is required. The skeletons I mark in the interleaved Bible (soon to be named), merely with the number of the skeleton, in *red* ink, to distinguish these from my registry numbers. It is from this large source that my examples are drawn for the PREACHER'S MANUAL, and from which I selected such as were suitable to the several objects in view, as far as my judgment and time to exercise it allowed, and which I humbly hope will be a benefit to thousands who cannot make the same research. My Common-place books were also open to me.

The second book is an interleaved Bible, every leaf having a blank page. A Bible should be bought in sheets and given to the binder with orders to insert the blanks; and, that the whole be not too bulky, let all the books before Isaiah form the first volume, and the others the second volume. As there are two columns of print in a page of the Bible, so a line should be drawn down the middle of the blank to answer thereto, and to as many figures of verses as are in a page of the Bible, so you give in writing figures in each column at exact opposition:— the specimen as follows:

| Verses. | Register Nos. | Verses. | Register Nos. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 17 | .... 5, 8 | 23 | ....24, 8, 3 |
| 18 | ....12, 17, 27, 26 | 24 | .... 9, 7, 10 |
| 19 | .... 8, 14, 19, 45 | 25 | .... 6, 28, 36 |
| 20 | .... 4, 6, 28, 32 | 26 | .... 8, 58, 20 |
| 21 | .... 6, 5, 12, 27 | 27 | ....16, 72, 65 |
| 22 | .... 3, 12, 15, 19 | 28 | ....17, |

Here then you commence your operations, against Ps. xc. 2 you place No. 1, of Registry-book; against Gen. ii. 7, No. 2; Matt. xxvi. 39, No. 3; and so on to the end.

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Then follows the practical use. You wish to preach from Ps. xc. 2; you turn to your interleaved Bible for Ps. xc. 2; you find against it No. 1; to know what this No. 1 means, you turn to your Registry-book for No. 1, and there you find Bates on the Existence of God; and perhaps you may have other figures directing to other works in your interleaved Bible, for in the index just given you find more figures therein; and in this manner you proceed for other texts. Nothing like this could give so short a way to know what you have on a text, for your memory may fail, and you may not have time to make search. But while the library is very small it may be sufficient to place the registry numbers in the margins of the Bible in common use; but when enlarged, this brief way must be abandoned, and give place to the plan now recommended.

Your *third book* is available for *subjects*, and may be formed like a lawyer's or bookkeeper's ledger, in reference to book-keeping. The journal contains the affairs transacted with every correspondent as they occur; it is a general record, and fills one book after another. But if it be required to know all that has been transacted or done for this or that person, and no other book be used, search must be made throughout the whole journal, and the items must be drawn out at an immense labour. Now to save this monstrous labour a ledger is provided, and particulars of each correspondent's account are drawn from the journal to distinct folios of the ledger; such pages in the ledger give the whole account. Still there would be trouble in turning over the pages of the ledger for particular persons' accounts; then, further to save trouble, an index is provided to direct to each account in alphabetical arrangement. This comparison answers to the student's Common-place book. The pattern of this Common-place book I shall give presently, but first I give the pattern of the index, as follows:

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A.

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Assurance ..... 9
Angels..... 10
Affections ..... 16
Afflictions ..... 19
Atonement ..... 56

B.

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C.

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Here then the course of proceeding is plain: folio 1 of the Common-place receives the above article, Attributes of God: whatever the library has upon the divine attributes appears at folio 1, and so on for other articles: but in this case it were better, after mentioning his existence, No. 1, in the Registry, to say, see article God in the above index, p. 179, as this opens to a great variety of divinity matter.

Here follows a specimen of such a page:

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Article, GOD.

Collect the material of this page from any thing your Registry furnishes, say, see Registry (for shortness, R. only) No. 1; from such divinity books as you possess, or divine treatises. Hence you collect Jehovah's names, his Nature, Immutability, Infinity, Omnipresence, Wisdom, Will, Sovereignty, Love, Grace, Goodness, his Works of Creation, &c., &c., marking down at each particular the author, volume, and page, where each is to be found.

You may again divide this great subject and transfer them to other pages as distinct heads, and giving in the index such titles and pages, under the words respectively.

Another page.

SOUL.—You will have its immortality, nature, its spirituality. Name often used for *spirit*, and more properly so; naming such authors as your library gives; as Flavel on the Soul. You will see the Registry, No. 2, Soul's Immortality, referring to Bates's Lectures, p. 37.

The word MIND is also connected with the subject, and sometimes the HEART :—on all these several words, Soul, Spirit, &c., see Cruden, and Theological Dictionaries,—for these give ideas as well as words.

1. See more particularly Cruden's Concordance, under the words *Soul*, *Spirit*, and in his explanations you get much information.

2. You will also collect for every article what even general indexes of works in hand furnish: here you obtain great help. When you purchase books, note, those that have good indexes are worth twice the money of those that have none; and likewise the matter obtained through indexes, if appropriate, is on certain accounts to be preferred before all others, for such matter is not so much subject to the recognition of knowing persons, as if taken from sermons, &c., professing to treat on the subject.

In the examination of those indexes, you first observe

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your proper subject, as by pattern of a page in Common-place book, No. 2, on *Soul*. 2. In the examination you meet with the like ideas, as *Spirit*, *Mind*, &c. 3. Regard affinities in general for illustration, or collateral uses.

3. You may note down whatever you hear in the preaching of other ministers, or what they say in conversation, if worth noting; or what is found in magazines, or such works as the Pulpit, &c.

4. You may take a brief abstract from the books you borrow, that will suit many articles in your index.

5. If books have tables of contents, examine these also.

6. Put down to each article your own best thoughts, conceived when your mind is clear and vigorous.

7. Whatever that is pertinent to any subject which you find in commentators, note down these also.

8. A good parallel Bible will give help, and some of these, as A. Clarke's, have *general indexes*.

9. The table of contents and general indexes, and table of Scriptures of the Preacher's Manual, will furnish much subject; but this object would be best secured by noting in the proper pages of your Common-place book what you meet with as strikingly suitable.

In general practice, when you wish to preach from a text, besides what matter you have upon such text, you may refer to the subject nearest akin to the text in your index of Common-place. In all divinity subjects the doctrine of *affinities*, like that of relationship, Topic 4, is of great consequence to be observed.* And *è con*, if you wish to preach on a subject you will choose a text to suit it, as Dwight does in his Theology, so that your Registry and Common-place mutually assist each other.

It is my constant practice when I have preached from

* See my note, vol. ii. p. 397, respecting *transitions*.

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a text, to mark the year when it was used in the margin of my Study-Bible;—if you do so it will prevent your preaching inadvertently the same text;*—but at the end of six or seven years I give a second sermon, as in that time what you said is forgotten, or the congregation is in that time greatly changed: but in such cases I endeavour to improve my old skeleton, and then nobody can complain.

How ministers can go on with credit without an arranged library, I cannot conceive; yet I know some that have several thousands of volumes, and often know not what they contain, or where to go for helps. If any can go on so it must be by the assistance of an amazing memory (such as I have not), but I suspect that the poverty of thousands of sermons is owing to the want in question. But though I recommend so many sources, yet I would not have you to over-crowd your sermons, or rather, overcharge them with matter, as some persons do, by which they often discuss nothing effectually. Vide vol. i., p. 13, of the Preacher's Manual.

* A friend of mine once took a certain text, this done, it darted into his mind that he had used it a few weeks before at the same place; his distress was great: it was not the fact, but he thought so.

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# APPENDIX.

## AN ESSAY ON PLAIN LANGUAGE.

### ADDRESSED TO MINISTERS.

"Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it."—*Hab.* ii. 2.

"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power."—1 *Cor.* ii. 4.

"I had rather speak five words with my understanding, so that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."—1 *Cor.* xiv. 19.

"A preacher is to fancy himself as in the room of the most *unlearned man in the parish*, and therefore must put such parts of his discourse as he would have all understand, in so plain a form of words that it may not be beyond the meanest of them. This he will certainly study to do, if his desire is to edify them rather than to make them admire himself as a learned and a highly spoken man."—BISHOP BURNET.

"Avoid all exotic phrases, scholastic terms, and forced rhetorical figures: since it is not difficult to make easy things appear hard; but to render hard things easy is the hardest part of a good orator as well as preacher."—ARCHBISHOP USHER.

THE spirit of the above quotations clearly points out what ought to be done in reference to the object of this address, and which I presume will be a powerful auxiliary to the intention of the preceding Lectures: the Lectures were to introduce order for the construction of a sermon; the Essay is to recommend *plain words* for filling it up; to secure, as far as possible, the edification of the most



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untaught of the people. In the Lectures I have, in several places, hinted at this needful observance; and now I wish to be explicit, forcible, and conclusive, in speaking my sentiments, that the bad practice of some may not continue, of using words which ninety out of every hundred do not understand; and at the same time highly to commend those preachers whose good sense has long since taught them that the words of the speaker must ever be on a level with the comprehension of the hearer, to meet the intention and spirit of our tenth Topic, and the example of our Lord. For this purpose, consider,

I. What you are to be dissuaded from.

II. What you are to be urged to.

III. The reasons that ought to prevail in it.

I. The thing dissuaded from is our modern polite English, which, as it is said, is greatly enriched by the introduction of an uncommon mass of Greek, Latin, and French words and terms, which are compounded and re-compounded till they reach eight or ten syllables, to the wonderful delight of well-educated persons, in the study of the sciences, or in the perusal of works of taste; and that this may nowhere be missing, it is to adorn the pulpit, and establish the reputation of the preacher. As to literature and science, they shall have quiet possession of our modern vocabulary of words, but the pulpit is not to be subject to innovation: these fascinating, unusual sounds are not there to be heard, though the passion for them may be manifest enough, and though many arguments are commonly advanced to maintain this position in the pulpit.

It will, however, be admitted that the words so imported into our language may be introduced into the pulpit where the congregations are almost exclusively well educated. If they wish for this refinement, and are willing to pay for it, let them have it; but if the congregation are mixed, partly uneducated, the taste of the former must give way to the latter as the weaker party, to whom our com-

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passion is due: we must, like our great High-priest, "have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way." Christ promised the poor the Gospel *in perpetuum* in its purity, and he preached to the poor in a style of address in which they received it gladly, because they understood it perfectly; and further, he did not alter his plain style when learned scribes, critical and severe, were about him. Therefore of what Christ has promised and bequeathed to the poor and the ignorant, and left them as their patrimony, let no one deprive them. In pity and compassion Christ's servants must confirm the grant in its full meaning and due proportion. Many of this order of our people are suffering all the calamities of poverty and ignorance; therefore, in Christian feeling, which will cost nothing but a little humility and self-denial, give them a countervailing blessing: better seize their goods and chattels for rent, or serve them with Irish ejectments, than keep from them their right,—a plain, intelligible gospel.

To this view of things one would think no objections could be urged; but such is the ingenuity of man to evade simplicity, that superficial pleas are advanced of benefiting the gospel by what is called improved language. It is said that the cause of religion and progress of the gospel are promoted by it, by subduing the prejudices of unconverted persons who are disgusted at the plainness, simplicity, and most singular phraseology, that accompany it in plain preachers. It is said that the modern style will remove the offence of the Cross: this is a mere figment of the imagination, and experience is against it; for until a man is convinced of sin,—convinced that he is a guilty creature before God, and justly liable to eternal death,—he will ever remain prejudiced at the bottom of his heart, though he may attend the gospel against a scheme that strikes at sin and self-sufficiency in all their forms and existences, and that commends a whole and complete Saviour to be relied on for salvation. Against



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this, let it be considered that St. Paul, who was as zealous, and as wise also, as any messenger of truth ever was, determined not to proceed upon this plan, 1 Cor. ii. 1—5. It is urged, again, that St. Paul was a learned man, and that he did actually use the wisdom given him in the promotion of the gospel cause. Now it is admitted that St. Paul was a learned man, and that he did use his learning, especially in his epistles to the Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews. But how did he use his learning? Surely in throwing his divine light on the Old Testament scriptures; in his elaborate discussions on difficult points of divinity, in accumulating evidences of truth, and in tracing the principles of things (Topic 12 & 19); but as to the medium of communication by language, he says, "He would rather speak five words, by which he might teach others," preferring this to a flowery bewitchery of words or speech that betrays the sacred cause to the misapprehension of the unlearned: such are our imported, adopted words, to our uneducated English people, who are ninety out of every hundred throughout Great Britain. Here then the wants of the educated and uneducated do actually come into collision; and surely, as Christians, we know in whose favour we are to decide; certainly in favour of the great mass of our population, whose salvation is of as much importance as the minimum of the hundreds who would engross the ministry in their own favour, and devote the property which they are blessed with to secure that object, buying up the ministry, as votes were once bought to support an unfeeling aristocracy in politics.

I am no enemy to learning, to real eloquence; but foreign words do not promote it. Learning and science are at perfect liberty to adopt what words they please to promote them: if a minister preach to assemblies wholly educated, let him preach to them as such. If he must enter the polite circle, I suppose he must be like others. If he address a letter to a person of quality, his words as well

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as style must comport with the occasion. If he write a book that is likely to pass into the drawing-rooms and libraries of polite people, let him throw all the ornament he pleases into his composition; but if he condescend to preach to the uneducated, or even mixed congregations, let him choose speech to the understanding of the people. This was, as the motto of the Essay, the opinion of Bishop Burnet: he ought so to speak that the most unlearned person in his presence may understand, nay, may not be able to misunderstand. I say, let imported commodities take their full range; but let them not be heard in the pulpit. "Hitherto shall ye come, but no farther." Let ministers here receive a hint in kindness of spirit. How many of their number have gone unpaid, perhaps despised, for their attempts to please the fastidious and insatiable modernizers!

It is further urged, that for the benefit and honour of the gospel, the refinement of the age renders refinement in ministers an affair of *necessity*. This is hardly worth a serious answer; every spiritual or true servant of our Lord Jesus Christ very well knows the points in which he ought to excel, and will, by the grace of Christ, do his utmost to meet the necessity of the case.

Other pleas might be noticed, but, "laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity;" and I dismiss them for that which is of more importance.

II. The thing urged—Plain familiar language in the pulpit, instead of masses of unintelligible words.

By plain language, I mean the old anglicized Saxon, now naturalized by the sanction of a thousand years, and mixed with words of the ancient Britons, which together goes by the name of pure English, in distinction from the mixed English which is now prevailing, and has been since the introduction of such cumbrous commodities as are derived from the Greek, Latin and French schools; the progress of their introduction is accurately marked by Dr. Johnson.

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Admit a hint or two as to the origin of our plain language. The inhabitants of England, the Britons, when subdued by Hengist and Horsa, the Saxon conquerors, certainly did adopt, after a lapse of years (for such exchanges cannot be suddenly realized), a large share of the Saxon tongue, a dialect of the German, and here we find the origin of what we call pure or plain English. Our English, however, though improved by the Saxon, was in a very defective state through a paucity of words. It was not for a very considerable time committed to writing, because the people were not able to write; such was our ancestors' degradation. The language bore all the marks and character of its having originated with a rude people; still it discovered a high capacity to express the feeling and passions of nature; whatever came under the cognizance of the senses and appetites, whatever was necessary to carry on war and bloodshedding. It was ample enough also to express all rural and domestic employments; the endearments of family life, the intercourse of the sexes: some of their expressions of this kind are said to possess exquisite sensibility. The powers of friendship had no need to smother in their breasts for want of expression. With such a language, defective as it was, the poet might throw his genius and imagination upon it, might extol the hero, or raise enchantment on the scenery of rural blessedness, to which their rude music might be added: and highly charmed, I suppose, we should have been to have heard their poetic numbers, and the rude clang of culinary kettles and pans; while these, with their vocal choruses, would make the woods ring, and frighten the wolves and foxes to distant retreats. But for the purposes of religion there was a total lack of words to clothe such ideas, except about their god Woden or Oden.

Time, no doubt, would effect some improvement; but the great means of that improvement was the introduction of Christianity and the labours of Augustine. The Chris-

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tian religion brought with it its own language—a mighty accession it was to the stock of words before known; but it became then necessary to give this Scripture language a visible form by writing, that it might be read as well as heard, that it might be a text-book and a book of reference; the Saxon and ancient British being the vehicles to bear that form, the Latin version then extant being of no use for purposes of instruction: and it appears by history that the book of Psalms was translated into Saxon (the general term) about the year 706. After this the four Gospels, about 721. Some years afterwards the rest of the Scriptures were completed by the venerable Bede. This translation continued till the fourteenth century, when a new version, better suited to the age, was effected by the revered Wickliffe, and which was no doubt a great improvement. An erroneous notion has prevailed that Wickliffe first translated the Scriptures; the truth is, his zeal against the church of Rome, whose avowed purpose was to conceal the Scriptures, led him to revise and improve the old Saxon copies. He amended the style to meet some improvements of his times; but he went further, and, consulting the Vulgate, he introduced many Latin words and terms, which are brought down to the present time, to the injury, as I think, of the original text. Still improvement was effected.

Without noticing other subsequent translations (for there were many), we shall close the list with what we call King James's Bible, which is that now in use among us. This last was produced by a constellation of great and learned men, and, it seems, obtained the title of a new translation out of the original tongue. I cannot but look upon this title as a fallacy, for these translators had not only the older translation before them for their main guide, but they had also the Vulgate before them; the veneration they paid to the Vulgate is evident, for whoever compares the Vulgate with the Hebrew Bible, will see the striking similarity of their phraseology. It is true, that the Vulgate

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was well translated, so that the damage was small in following it; yet the title was wrong: but the protestantism of the times would not allow the least public hint of any use made of a work essentially Catholic.

Still we are under no uneasiness as to our present translation; upon the whole it is a good one, and now forms the true foundation of pure English language. We are not likely to get any further improvement in our text, while the imported words are neither so numerous nor difficult to be understood but that our common, uneducated people can, as to the letter of Scripture, understand it; but further innovations in language, in our day, do incalculable mischief if brought into the pulpit. From this it is now my business to dissuade ministers.

1. There is no need of new words; we have in our Bible a *copia verborum* well adapted for all religious purposes: it gives form and likeness to every thing that is holy; it gives expansion to the rational faculty of thought, and casts the human mind into its own image; and is absolutely necessary to our renewal in knowledge, Col. iii. 10. Such is its copiousness, that no good thing remains untold. Every nation that has read it in its pure form, if it has not been converted, has been enlightened above all other people. See what it did by the small part conveyed to the Jews in their infant state. God gave his word unto Jacob (Ps. cxlvii. 19), or they had remained as other nations. He not only gave Egypt national and political power, but his *word*, which by a faithful translation we also possess. God grant it were made better use of! Besides what it historizes or narrates, the language of the Law brought proper conceptions of the Divine character and government—the expressions of the Divine will; it also conveyed intimations of mysteries relating to redemption. The language of the Psalms brought the eloquence of piety. In the Proverbs we find maxims of wisdom. The Prophets gave sublimity to thought, and views in anticipation of

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Jehovah's acts in time to come. In the language of the New Testament, a further additional vocabulary was introduced, while the facts contained therein laid a foundation of faith and hope through the mediation of the Son of God.

By such means we see that our pure English has a variety, extension, and capability which it had not in itself, just as now it confers upon the languages of the heathen the same benefits; as is testified by our missionaries. Our Bible, therefore, is to be estimated, in its valuation, by the work it performs—blessing the life that now is, and pointing to the future world, and this with very few modern importations: hence I conclude that Scripture forms a fit vocabulary of religious words corroborated by others which I shall soon name to you.

2. These Scriptures are the better fitted for this purpose, as they are now cleared, or nearly so, of vulgarisms and obsolete words; these had not their origin from the Hebrew, but in the translation which followed the common understanding of the times. Further, in our copy of Holy Writ the rules of grammar are clearly defined and observed, so that it has been said that the Bible adheres more closely to the rules of composition than any other work of its own date.

3. The stock of words provided in the Scriptures will enable the preacher to speak classically, elegantly, and eloquently; and, though deprived of foreign stock, he will still retain his utmost skill of giving advantage to his conceptions by perspicuity of arrangement, happy construction of sentences, a judicious choice of words, and most agreeable and harmonious periods. He will still give all the grace of delivery, as by the fifteenth Topic. Thus, while he delights his audience, he will only use such words as common people understand.

4. As this plain language admits of beauty, so it is

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also capable of strength, for the old English is capable of expressing the most violent feelings of the mind, or the most pathetic. Nay, it is capable of sublimity also, for sublimity does not consist in pompous words, but in the thought itself: pompous words may delight the ear, but they do not produce such a true elevation of soul as short words, mostly monosyllables (and of such the old language generally consists), while foreign words, compounded and doubly compounded, impede the current of thought, and rob the subject of its proper energy. The least attention to Scripture language and that of nature will supply all the evidence that is necessary to the proof of this point. Even our poets and orators of feeling and sensibility have always been aware of this; and though the common strain of their language may have been refined, yet if they had an affair of the heart to treat of respecting these points, they turned for the occasion to the wording of pure nature; and here they pay deference to what I recommend.

5. It is to be observed that as water is purer near the spring, so language is the purer the farther it is traced into antiquity. Here, with veneration, we approach the Hebrew language, as that which God himself taught to man (for this opinion we have very high authority); then it follows that that which God taught was sure to be expressive of the things to be spoken: for language to be expressive, is its highest praise on all occasions; I am sure it is so, then, in the pulpit. The Hebrew principal words, terms, names of animals and things, here found, express the *qualities* which the words stand for, or of some supposed relationship which they bear to the original Hebrew roots under consideration. This distinctness of identity might be supposed to be lost in the translation, but in the case before us the Saxon language receives the office of a faithful conveyancer to preserve the true sense of the original, and convey it to our own translation; for it is an undeniable

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fact that the Saxon and the whole of the German dialects do, in like manner with the Hebrew, convey in their words and appellatives the properties and qualities of the things represented by such words. So then the original expressiveness of the Hebrew is not lost, but retained to give a proud pre-eminence to our old English; and points out, if we have eyes to see, the suitability of scripture words in our theology.

Next to such words as are found in the Scriptures, the whole range of plain words, as furnished by our dictionaries, and plain compositions in general, such as I may point out, are to be adopted; and when these are ranged together in sentences, the light of truth is seen and its power felt to the great advantage of near ninety out of every hundred throughout England. From such preaching the uneducated derive information, edification, and consolation, through a medium of communication suited to the slender acquirements of their state;—high and heavenly things are brought down to their comprehension;—the plentiful rain of divine truth descends to refresh a weary inheritance: Ps. lxviii. 9.

6. As a further argument, our experience convinces us that there is some indescribable attraction attending the study and reading of the word of God: it steals upon our hearts, or distils like the dew upon Mount Hermon; it harmonizes with our feelings; its very words strike out extensive meanings, conveying ideas of qualities within the words themselves of vast extent; and hence it is so well adapted as a text-book, and opens subjects to preachers beyond any other composition.

7. This is not a mere weak partiality, or the overweening of a pious mind. That consummate critic, Mr. A. Blackwall, says: "The Old Testament is the richest treasury of all the sublimity of thought, moving tenderness of passion, and vigorous strength of expression, (by means of its most fitting words) which is to be found in

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all the language by which mortals convey their words. . . . . The Hebrew is an original and essential language, that borrows of none but lends to all. Some of the sharpest pagan writers, inveterate enemies to the religion and learning of both Jews and Christians, have always allowed the Hebrew language to have a noble emphasis, and a close and beautiful brevity. The metaphors in that admirable work are apposite and lively; they illustrate the truths expressed by them, and raise the admiration of the reader. The names of men, animals, &c., &c., are very significant; one *word* is often a good description, and gives you a satisfactory account of the chief and distinguishing property or quality of the thing or person named." *

You will observe that this excellent critic fixes upon the very *word* of Scripture, and extracts wonderful sense and meaning; and this is the point I aim to insist on. Now if this language be so valuable, and its beauties transfused into our old English, and the essence of that old stock still retained in our king James's Bible, we have an augmentation of value of unspeakable worth. The preacher, for his private enjoyment, if a man of taste, may indulge his imagination with the finest poetry in the world in the most simple dress: for his public use he can show most intelligibly how to make all nature speak, †— to speak instruction,—to speak the praises of God who formed things to be signs of moral and spiritual ideas.

It will not much diminish the student's pleasure to find that the most material part of our old English (next to the Saxon) is derived from the ancient British. We shall never doubt the energy of British feeling and language: this is associated with the love of our country,—of our fireside,—of all our social endearments. Never then let us slight, but cherish, a vehicle of communication by such high

* Blackwall's Sacred Classics.

† See vol. i. 195, 327, 342; and vol. ii., Topic 2.

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considerations: the British part descending to us through such a long line of ancestry;—the wording, formed of British and Saxon texture;—the truths themselves, from the everlasting Jehovah. By him given to Adam, from Adam to the Patriarchs, passing down to Moses, the Prophets, Apostles, &c., and so transfused into pure English.

III. The reasons that ought further to prevail with the preacher for the use of plain language, &c.

If I had the eloquence of Demosthenes, how would I press upon every true minister of Jesus Christ, immediately to commence the study of pure old English! Some, to their honour, have always preached it. Let us be all of one mind to establish it,—actually to put it in practice; experimenting at first upon the most illiterate congregations, accompanying your plain words, to silence objectors, with a superior manner and an elegant enunciation (fifteenth Topic), free from an antiquated style. I wish for no peculiar phraseology,—not a quakerish mode, nor an attempt at scriptural style (scripture words retained), because that style could not be maintained, it being inimitable,—I want a modern medium, such as a man now commonly speaks to another upon common affairs; but quotations must be correct, and unvaried from the text. I want nothing further in this direction. I wish this plain language to have all the ornaments of modern refinement. for it is required that *words* only and distinctively be as pure as possible. I say pure as possible, for some of another class of words must be admitted, and many new words, we are sure, can be perfectly understood by their long use, or by their belonging to ideas that are familiarized to even country people by often talked-of inventions, as about railways, steam operations, machinery of all kinds; but to make doctrines plain which are expressed by Latinisms, &c., they must be fully unfolded, or turned into plain English. I cannot, I need not mark all the words which will require care to be understood, but I certainly

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think that, in the view of this Essay, you would not, in speaking of the adorable perfections and attributes of the Divine nature, perplex ignorant people by using such terms as infinity, immutability, omnipresence, and omniscience: but that you would exchange these, however uncouth they may appear, to, without-bounds, unchangeable, everywhere-present, all-powerful, all-seeing, all-knowing, &c. Other words may, without explanation or exchange, be used discreetly; if such stand in a sentence connected with several other words well understood, the words known will interpret the unknown, or though in some cases a foreign word occurs, yet if it has had a long standing in the Bible or prayer-book, the difficulty will not be felt.

1. I would urge pure English upon you, my dear companions in the service of the best of Lords, because of its sterling propriety and weight. The matter of our embassy being settled,—what is to be addressed to the party sent to,—then, in point of order, comes the words by which it is to be conveyed; and while regard is to be had in such words to the dignity of the Sovereign who sends, attention must be paid to suit the character, quality, and understanding of the nation or people sent to—that the words used may be well understood—nay, cannot be misundersood;* not merely understood by the court, but by the country, if both are equally interested in the embassy. If the subject is to make the nation happy, the nation in all its grades should be benefited by the report of the tidings. This quite agrees with the case before us; there is no arguing upon a case so plain, it cannot be otherwise than correct.

2. I urge this matter because it is of easy accomplishment. I do not recommend to you the study of Arabic, that you might collate your Scriptures with the Arabic

* See the Marquis of Sligo's address at Jamaica, published in England, in the public papers, in July 1834; the plainness of that address is a complete illustration of the point in hand.

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Bible; but for a similar argument that the servants of Naaman urged, to recommend a compliance with the prophet's remedy,—that the thing is *easy*. It was only to step down into Jordan, and a cure would be effected: so here you have only "to condescend to men of low estate," and the object shall be attained. But if unexpectedly this plain or pure English does offer difficulty, and the style of sacred Scripture itself is so far beyond imitation that it cannot be attempted, then, I say, acquire a style for yourself. Read works that are remarkable for plainness, till you can judge for yourself; do not object to them because not found on the shelves of the polite or learned, nor object to the names of their authors because you may be told they wrote for the nursery or the cottage; because you must in this case go back to former times,—measure your steps backward from the degree of your present attainments, and unlearn what has cost you much labour to learn, and thus to acknowledge that you have misspent much time as well as labour. Part with what you have got, let it go, and God will give you twice as much in true wisdom and holy zeal for the improvement of the wretched and unlearned, whom you cannot see perish for lack of knowledge. The books that I have examined for this purpose are the following, which I recommend for your perusal. Bunyan's first part of the Pilgrim's Progress. Bunyan, whom Dr. Johnson highly extols, has in this work brought vast conceptions, noble thoughts, and ingenious similitudes, into the plainest words that the dictionary gives us. Next, Defoe's first part of Robinson Crusoe, and also his Family Instructor.* Defoe was a great man, a wise man, a good man. One part of his Crusoe was a true history, the rest allegory; but both are highly instructive. Dr. Adam Clarke began life with these books as books of entertainment, and ended life with admiration of their excellences. Bishop

* These works are recommended chiefly on account of their language.

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Beveridge's Sermons bring you nearer to the pulpit style, and are most admirably plain. A moderate share of attention to these and such like works, will give you facility in the acquirement of pure English.

3. As you ought fearlessly to adopt pure English, so you stand encouraged to it by the authority and practice of some of the greatest names in literature and divinity. Dean Swift was a man of gigantic though perverted mind. A great critic said, that he "never used a derived or foreign word where an English one could be found;" and this perhaps accounts for the great popularity of his works, his Gulliver's Travels, his Tale of a Tub, and his Drapier's Letters. I have some of his letters now before me, and they confirm the character of his writings. You have also the name of the great Dr. South, of a giant-like mind, and a true Englishman. He disdained to use a foreign word, unless compelled to it. By your referring to the list of authors you will be referred to quotations from him. Dr. Adam Clarke I lawfully claim as an advocate of pure language. Dr. Watts, in his poetry and Psalms, &c., uses often as plain language as possible. Next, but not least, I have Robert Hall, as to his opinion of plain language, though he did not avail himself very often of its aid. In Dr. Olinthus Gregory's Life of Hall occurs the following conversation: "In one of our interviews with Mr. Hall, I used the word *felicity* three or four times. He asked, 'Why do you say *felicity?* happiness is a better word, more musical, and common English, coming from the Saxon.' 'Not more musical, I think, Sir.' 'Yes, more musical; and so are all words derived from the Saxon generally. Listen, Sir: My heart is smitten and withered like grass. There is plaintive music for you. Listen again, Sir: Under the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. There's cheerful music.' 'Yes, but *rejoice* is French.' 'True; but all the rest is Saxon, and *rejoice* is almost out of tune with the rest. Listen again, Sir: Thou hast

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delivered mine eyes from tears, my soul from death, and my feet from falling. All Saxon, except delivered. I could think of the word *tear*, Sir, till I wept. Then for another noble specimen, and almost all good old Saxon English: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all my days, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.'"

And now, fellow-labourers in the kingdom and patience of Jesus, the representation is before you; my reasoning, authorities, and examples: the ninety out of every hundred immortal beings wait to be blessed with truth that they can understand. Fear not the charge of singularity; the Redeemer, whom you will imitate, will secure your reputation, ensure your usefulness, and will own your name with honour in the solemn day of account.

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